LOOKING...

Over the Shoulder

Tales of Auburn Junction

· FLOYD LINK ·

RY
IA
LB
RN
RN.JU

Copy 2 IC genealogy

ECKHART PUBLIC LIBRARY
AUBURN, INDIANA
925-2414

1. Books may be kept two weeks and may be renewed for the same period.

2. A fine will be charged on each book which is not returned according to the above rule. No book will be issued to any person incurring an excessive fine until it has been paid.

3. All injuries to books beyond reasonable wear and all losses shall be made good to the satisfaction of the Librarian

4. Each borrower is held responsible for all materials drawn on his card and for all fines accruing on the same.

DEMCO

DEKALB
AUBURN
JUNCTION
TALES
LINK
89

ECKHART PUBLIC LIBRARY
Auburn, IN 46706

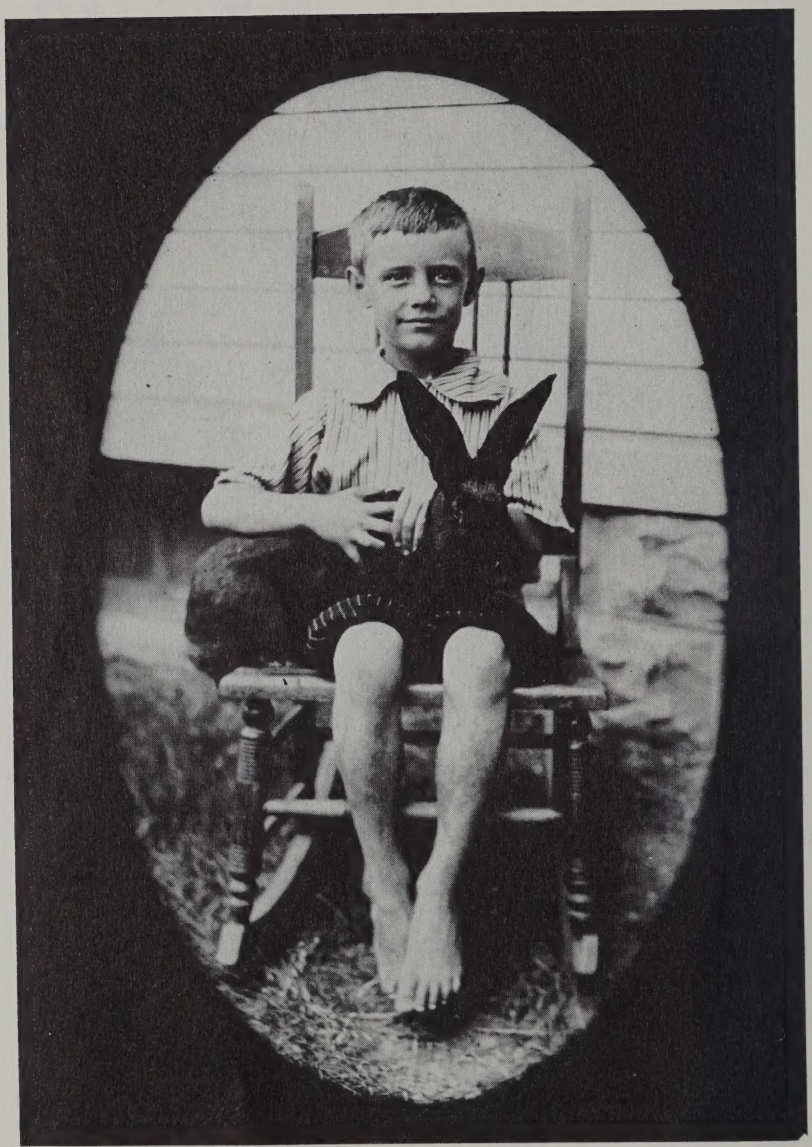
9-93

To Eckhart Library.
An old Hangout for us Kids
Best wishes
Floyd Link
1993

Eckhart Public Library

603 S. Jackson Street Auburn, IN 46706
Phone: 219-925-2414

Patron is responsible for all
material borrowed.



Floyd Link as a boy.

Looking Over the Shoulder

Tales of Auburn Junction

By

Floyd Link

Guild Craft of Indiana
A Division of Guild Press of Indiana, Inc.
6000 Sunset Lane
Indianapolis, IN 46208

Copyright © 1993 by Floyd Link

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any informational storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.

Guild Press of Indiana, Inc.
6000 Sunset Lane
Indianapolis, IN 46208

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress
Catalog Card Number
93-079615

ISBN 1-878208-26-8

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	Page
Cast of Characters	vi
Foreword	1
Acknowledgements	2
Nostalgia	3
Dad	4
Mom	10
The Farm	12
The Kitchen	18
Straw Ticks	19
Animals	21
A Temporary Haven	24
Crops	24
Grade School	28
Buddies	31
Home Remedies	34
The Crick	36
Pocket Knives	40
Butchering	41
The Canning Factory	44
The Kraut Factory	46
The Gas Plant	49
The Berry Patch	51
The Melon Patch	53
Sports and Games	54
Smoking	58
Ice Fishing	61
Guns	63
Hunting and Trapping	66
The Onion Fields	70
The Art of Throwing	73
Entertainment	77
The Gravel Pit	79

The Chicken Roast 83
Our First Radio 84
A Trip to Michigan 86
Music. 88
Freebies 91
Junction People 93
Morrison 98
Auction Sales 100
Odds and Ends 101
Square Dances 102
The Big Dig 104
Holidays 105
Way Back When 108
More of the Past 110
Why is It? 113

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Perry Denver Link, a wonderful father ..... Dad

Callie Link, a hard-working, loving mother ..... Mom

My oldest brother ..... Glen

Big sister (my second mother) ..... Helen

The middle Link and my good friend. ..... Harold

That's me! ..... Floyd

Lived in Michigan, and played host to the Links. ..... Uncle Evan

Uncle Evan's boys Arnold, Herschel, Curtis & Milo ..... Cousins

Morrison Guilford, a listener and a gentle,
even-tempered man. The kids and their parents
all loved him. ..... Morrison

Farmer and good friend and neighbor. ..... Pete Ankney

The grocer and post office manager, he was
quite well-to-do. ..... Henry

Owned the restaurant and made the
world's best ice cream cone. ..... Annie

Bought the restaurant, made a card room
and a dance hall. The building shook. ..... Harry H

A drinking man ..... Bill

Dad's good pal and a great story teller. ..... Charley

Railroad section foreman who loved
to watch his men work. ..... Bruce

A fine craftsman and an innovative stoic. ..... Dave

Signal maintenance man and teacher. ..... Big Mike

A real old-timer and self-sufficient bachelor. ..... John

A natural musician and a fine plasterer. ..... Frank

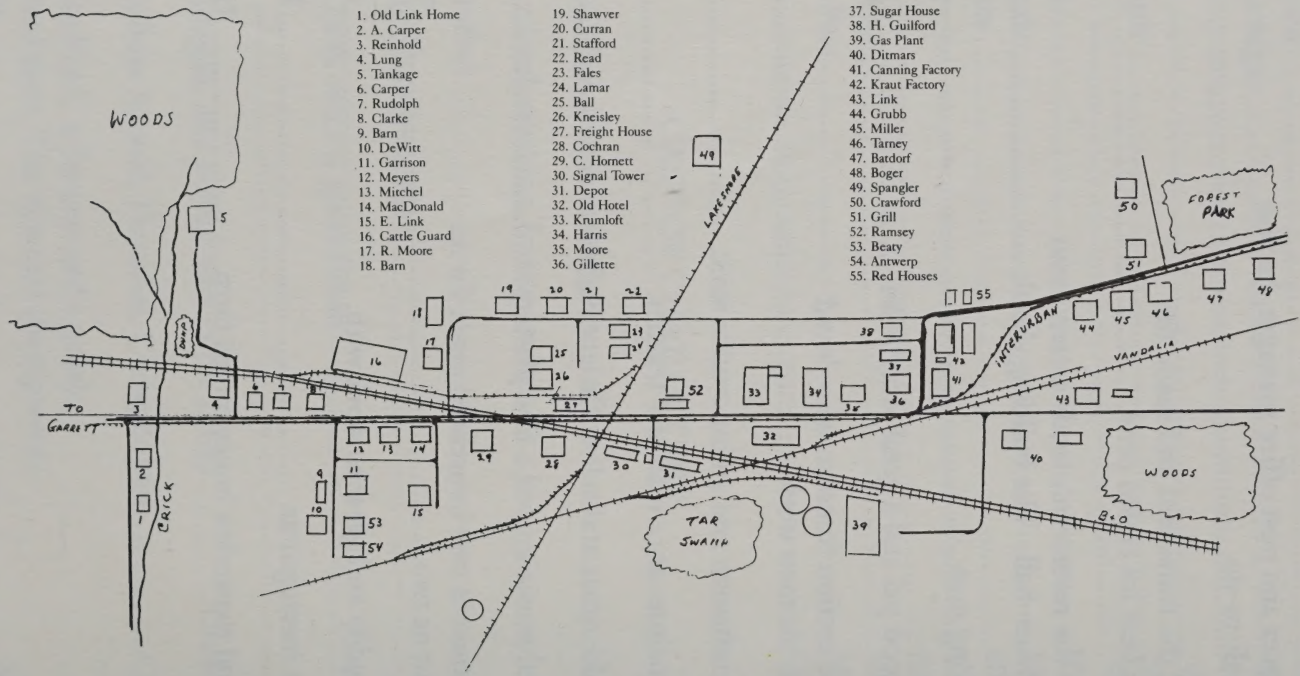
Five women in one household made for an
argument or two. ..... The Ditmars

Good buddy and great to work with. ..... Cy McNabb

Played a mean guitar. ..... Earl Stouder

We found mastodon bones on his farm. ..... Uncle Arthur

AUBURN JUNCTION IN THE TWENTIES



FOREWORD

Auburn Junction was a friendly little community about a mile and a half south and west of Auburn, Indiana, in DeKalb County.

The B&O, the Lakeshore and the Vandalia railroads all crossed there, thus the name. The depot, the signal tower, the freight house and the cattle pens were all part of the railroad property. Then there were Henry's store and post office, Annie's Restaurant and Boarding House, Carl's filling station, the canning factory, the kraut factory and the gas plant. It was quite a thriving little community in the early twenties.

Now, nearly three-quarters of a century later, I have put together some stories of how the people thought and lived and especially what it was like as a kid growing up in a small rural community, hoping maybe someday my grandchildren or even great-grandchildren might be interested in the way it was back then. The articles, printed in the *Evening Star*, drew a good deal of interest. They have now been collected in book form.

Today's "Pepsi Generation" may wonder if we in Auburn Junction were very disadvantaged, but since we had no idea what the future would bring, we thought we had the best of everything.

And since we had family love, security, friendship and the beauty of a life lived in the out-of-doors and a good basic education in values, I suppose we did!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There were many people who had a part in making these stories possible.

First, there were my older sister and brothers, Helen, Glenn and Harold, who loved to talk about our home life and living and growing up in Auburn Junction.

Then there are all the people who had lived in Auburn Junction and always had an incident to tell whenever we happened to run into each other.

And, last but not least, there was Jane Kempf, who was gracious enough to include some of these stories in her newspaper column as well as editing my copy and doing the complete data entry job. It was her encouragement that made all these recollections a fun project rather than a tiresome job.

To all these fine people, thank you.

Floyd Link

NOSTALGIA

I moved back to Auburn after having been away for nearly thirty years and have been able to take a really good look at Auburn Junction and realize all the changes that have taken place since we lived there in the early 1920s.

The most obvious changes are in the railroads.

The old Vandalia tracks are completely torn out and the right of way is either grown up to weeds or has been graded and planted to grass.

The railroad bridge over the creek still stands, but as far as I can tell, that is the only reminder that is left.The Lakeshore is torn out and the B&O, which was a double track line, is now a single track and doesn't stop at the Junction any more.

The Interurban, where you could ride to Auburn for a dime (or walk up to Ensley Avenue and ride for a nickle) is also gone.

It made me sad to see our little ten-acre farm completely covered with small manufacturing plants, but even though all I could see was a group of sterile looking buildings, I could still pick out the areas where we plowed the corn and hoed the potatoes, where we had the melon and berry patches, and where we staked the cow out to pasture.

I remember how proud Dad was of his melon patch and how we kids hated to work in the strawberry and raspberry patches.

Our old house still stands, and even though it has been remodeled and the barn and all the outbuildings are gone, it still brings back memories of living there as a kid. I think of Mom heating water on an old kerosene stove to do the family washing in two tin tubs and a wash board. I remember her milking our old cow twice a day in all kinds of weather.

Dad fed the pigs, chickens, cow and horse two times every day, even though there were times, I am sure, when he didn't feel like it, but the stock had to be fed. We kids had our daily jobs to do and we knew better than to shirk them.

We never had much cash, but we never worried about that. We had plenty to eat and we were happy!

Grandma Ditmar's brick house still stands, but her orchard, where we snitched apples and pears, has been replaced with a factory building. John Dawkin's little house at the east end of our farm is gone and the county ditch, where we trapped muskrats for a little spending money, is covered over, and I assume, has been replaced with a tile drain.

The houses that are still standing look in better shape, as a rule, than they did back then. Most have well-tended, landscaped yards where chicken coops and pig pens used to stand.

Henry's Store and Post Office, Annie's Restaurant, Carl's Filling Station and the old hotel building are all gone, and the area where they stood is now covered with an unsightly junk yard.The gas plant, where they burned coal to make gas that supplied the area as far out as Kendallville, is completely gone and has been replaced by a few small buildings housing valves to regulate natural gas pumped in from Lord knows where.

The kraut factory, the canning factory and the sugar house are the only recognizable buildings still standing. They are being used for storage, but they are in a bad state of disrepair.

Changes are bound to occur because of what we call "progress," but you sometimes wonder whether replacing a friendly little community with a junk yard is progress. The Junction had its place in the past. Even though the railroads, the buildings, and most of the people are gone now, there is one thing that cannot be destroyed and that is the memory of a friendly, thriving little community and the people who lived there.

DAD

When you are a kid, you sometimes think your Dad is quite a tyrant. As you get older and start remembering, you change your opinion and decide your dad was a pretty fair guy. Dad worked hard all his life and provided our family with all the necessities and as many luxuries as possible.

We always had plenty to eat and clothes and shoes to wear. Sometimes we thought our clothes weren't quite as nice as other kids', but now

we can see that Dad was smart to buy durable clothes because of the way we used them.

All we had to do was ask and he would show us how to do a job, or help us with any kind of problems that might turn up, and there were a lot of those problems when we were kids.

In certain things, he was very strict. Most kids back in the twenties started hunting at a very early age, not only for the sport, but to add to the family larder with any game they might get.

When we came in from hunting with game of any kind, Dad would insist that we clean the game, pan ready, and then clean and oil the guns and put them away. Dad had hunted nearly all his life and even though his guns were quite old, they were all in good shape because of the care he had given them. If we left a gun sit too long after we came in from hunting, we sure heard about it. We learned real fast when Dad talked to us.

Dad liked to fish. I especially remember going to Big Center Lake just north of Angola to fish for crappies. In the old Model T Ford that was quite a trip, so we would leave early in the morning and usually get home late in the evening. Charley Cochran and one of his boys, usually Clit, went along. We would stop and get a package of sweet rolls and a link of bologna, and at lunch time, that tasted better than any steak we ever had.

When we got to the lake, we would have to seine minnows from a little creek that came in the north side of the lake. This was a job for us kids. We would strip off our overalls and have a big time in that creek besides getting our bait for the day.

The farmer who owned the land at that end of the lake had some old wood rowboats that he rented out at a dollar a day, and we usually got our money's worth even though we had to bail part of the time.

We fished with cane poles and used an old gunny sack for a fish bag. I don't believe we ever failed to get a mess of fish and often had enough to give to our neighbors in the Junction.

In the evenings after supper, Dad would walk down to the Junction for an hour or so before bedtime. The old timers would all congregate on a bench between Annie's Restaurant and Henry's Store and discuss

everything from weather to the doings of the county government.

They often started talking about their younger days and some of their yarns were very interesting to us kids when we were around to hear them. Winter did not stop these gatherings. Henry had provided several chairs around his coal-burning stove and the stories continued all winter. When there weren't enough chairs, somebody was usually sitting on one of the counters.

I remember one time Erv Pion, who was a steel worker working at the time for the gas plant, came into the store and jokingly told Dad he wanted his chair. Dad grinned and told him he could have it if he could take it.

Erv reached out like he was going to pull Dad out of the chair, and I don't know what happened or how it happened, but Erv ended up on his back on the floor and Dad was still sitting in his chair.

I never did see Dad in a fight, but I believe he could hold his own in any company!

Dad's Model T

It was in 1921 that Dad came home from Auburn one day driving a Model T Ford Touring Car. He had bought the car for $369 and after the salesman had showed him how to drive it, he came on home. We were all excited and wanted a ride, but Dad said he had to practice driving first.

The first thing he did was to build a garage on the east end of the barn. The concrete was mixed by hand in a mortar box. I was too small to help with the construction, but I am sure I was kept busy doing something.

Not long after Dad started putting the car in the garage, he miscalculated and pushed the north end out before he got the car stopped.

I never did see Dad use tobacco, either smoke or chew, but he did chew paraffin. He acquired this habit when he worked at the kraut factory. Before going to bed in the winter, he would go to the back door and toss his quid out in the back yard. When the snow melted in the spring, we had the prettiest white spotted back yard in the neighborhood.

Dad was never much of a drinking man, but he kept a bottle of

whiskey in the cupboard, solely for medicinal purposes. He would have his brother, Evan, who lived in Northern Michigan, send him juniper berries in the fall and these were put in the bottle with the whiskey. It had a pleasant taste and was only used for sore throats, colds and other aches and pains, and then only by the teaspoonful.

Dad did enjoy a glass of wine now and again. Each fall, when the grapes were ripe, the wine was made. He had a sixteen-gallon oak keg which was filled with water to swell up the wood, so the keg wouldn't leak and this had to set about a week before it was ready for the wine.

The time to pick wild grapes was after the first frost. He always used half wild and half tame grapes. We squeezed out the juice in our old lard press. I don't remember the exact amounts of juice, water and sugar used, but the keg was filled and maybe an extra jug or two.

The bung that closed the keg had a small rubber tube in it and that was put in a bottle of water. The bung was sealed with melted paraffin. Then, other than adding a little water now and then, it was not disturbed until Christmas morning.

On Christmas morning, the bung was removed and the wine was siphoned out to the bottles. These bottles were the old quart size, flat whiskey bottles. Those bottles must have been pretty old, because they seemed to be sitting around in our cellar as long as I can remember. We all had a taste of the wine on Christmas Day, and some of Dad's cronies would drop in for a taste of the new batch.

You'd think some of those old-timers were wine experts the way they would smell and sip that wine. They made many comments comparing this batch with former batches, and other wines they had tasted at various neighbors.

Dad also tried his hand at making home brew beer, but that was not as successful as his wine. You could never tell when a bottle was opened whether it would blow up all over the room, or whether it would be flat with no beads at all. As I remember, the pigs got a lot of the home brew.

The settlings in the crock the beer was brewed in made a very potent wine. Raisins or other fruit were put in the crock along with sugar and water and allowed to ferment 'til all the bubbling stopped. Then it was

siphoned into bottles and allowed to age, sometimes as long as a week. This tasted good, but it had a real kick. Dad enjoyed a small glass now and then.

Dad and Mom would go to Auburn to do their shopping on Saturday, and Dad would always come home with a pound of salted peanuts. You could buy a pound of peanuts in those days for a dime, and he liked an after-supper snack. When he sat down to enjoy some peanuts, he didn't eat them by the handsful like we kids. He would fill a small dish and eat them with a spoon. Looked foolish to us, but Dad enjoyed them that way.

He always kept an old wooden trunk up in the attic and we kids were not allowed to dig around in it. Some things I remember seeing in it was a set of augers and tools for making wooden pumps. He always kept them wrapped in cloth and well-oiled, and they were sharp as razors.

There was a cardboard box filled with empty medicine vials about the size of pencils. Dad's first wife died of cancer, and these vials held morphine pills, which was the only medicine used for cancer in those days. I don't know why he kept them. Just sentiment, I guess.

He had a roll of newspapers in that trunk. Some were of news that happened back around the turn of the century, but part were funny papers of that period. These were the most interesting to me and as I recall, the main character was named "Slim Jim." Dad would let us look at them when he checked the trunk to see whether his tools were rusting.

Dad's word was better than any written contract. A simple handshake was all that was needed to close any deal. I never knew him to go back on his word or leave any debt go unpaid.

Growing up with a father like our Dad was a better education than we ever received in school. He taught us right from wrong and whenever we were punished, we knew we needed it. Sometimes we thought the punishment was a little unfair, but Dad knew we would have to go out in the world someday and he wanted us to remember our days as kids and conduct ourselves as he had taught us back on the little farm in Auburn Junction.

Dad never did aspire to be a rich man, but he was always able to keep working and provide his family with a comfortable living.

He believed if you were able to work you could always find a job, and

I guess this trait rubbed off on his family. Sometimes, playing around was very attractive, but we remembered what we had been taught and our jobs always came first.

Yes, our Dad was quite a guy!

MOM

Most kids take their moms for granted. They are always there when you need them, and kids have so many other things to do they just don't give much thought to how much moms really do. After you get older you start remembering how important they were in helping kids grow up. My Mom always worked hard to see that we kids had good meals, clean clothes and a clean house to live in.

One of her big jobs was washing clothes. People today don't realize what a job it was to wash clothes for a family of six back in the early twenties. Her washing machine consisted of two tin tubs, a wash boiler, a washboard and a lot of elbow grease.

We got our water from the cistern with a pitcher pump; heated it in the boiler on a three-burner coal oil stove and then scrubbed the clothes on a washboard in one tub and rinsed them in the other tub.

Fels-Naptha was the popular soap back then if you used store-bought soap, but Mom would save all the used grease and lard and with a can of lye make a soap that was a little hard on the hands but it did take the dirt out of a pair of dirty bib overalls.

After rinsing, the clothes were run through a wringer that was clamped to the rinse tub and then hung on the outside lines stretched across the back yard. In the winter they froze stiff and would have to be taken down and hung on lines in the house to finish drying.

It was a miserable job, but it had to be done and Mom never complained.

We always had a big vegetable garden, and the only way to preserve vegetables was to can or dry them. Canning was a big job for Mom, but we kids did help in getting the vegetables ready for canning. They were packed in mason jars and then sealed with a rubber ring and a zinc screw lid. Next, the wash boiler was partly filled with water, set on the oil stove, and the cans were set in to cook for about two hours.

I don't remember how many quart cans were filled each year, but when the canning was all done, the shelves in our cellar were full. We always had enough fruit and vegetables to last us through the winter. Mom

used to dry a lot of sweet corn, but most of the corn was canned at the canning company in the Junction

I remember picking, husking, and silking four or five bushels of sweet corn getting it ready to take down to the cannery. We would also take several bushels of tomatoes down to be canned nearly every year. We all griped when we had to get corn and tomatoes ready for the cannery, but we never griped during the winter when we had them for supper.

Mom worked most of a week at butchering time. She started a couple days before getting all the lard cans and crocks washed and ready to use. The dining room had to be cleared out so the table could be used to cut up the meat and there were many other little jobs that had to be done before butchering day.

After the butchering was over, the meat still had to be prepared to keep over the winter and the floors and equipment had to have a thorough cleaning so it could be stored until the next year. Besides all this, Mom still fixed three big meals every day. Butchering was a lot of extra work for Mom, but she did it for her family.

We would make a twenty-gallon crock of sauerkraut each fall. The cabbage had to be cleaned, cored and cut and then a layer was put in the crock, salted and stomped until the juices flowed and more added until the crock was full. We had a couple of half round boards that went on top with a large stone to hold them down. The crock was then set behind the kitchen door to cure until ready to use. We kids did a lot of work making kraut, but Mom worked right along with us even though we usually ended up long after bed time.

In the evenings, after the supper dishes were washed, Mom usually had something to keep her busy until bed time.

With four kids, there were always clothes to mend or socks to darn. And if the repair work was pretty well caught up, she would be sewing carpet rags or crocheting. Mom seldom sat without something to work on.

She made a lot of our clothes and altered hand-me-downs to fit the smaller boys. Nothing was ever thrown out until completely worn out, and then it usually ended up in carpet rags. These carpet rags were old clothes that were torn up in strips about an inch wide, sewn end to end and rolled

in balls about the size of a bowling ball. When we had accumulated a gunny sack full, they were taken to someone with a loom and woven into rugs. Our front room was covered wall to wall with a rag carpet, and it wore for years.

All this after-supper work was done by the light of a coal oil lamp. We never did get electricity on our little farm.

The women back then visited each other quite often. If someone was making a quilt, that was a good reason for several ladies to get together, sew on the quilt, and discuss all the goings-on in the area. Most all the ladies would take a bag of something, sewing, knitting or crocheting, to work on whenever they went visiting.

One time, when Dad worked at the Auburn Automobile plant, he brought home a couple of bags of scraps from the upholstery shop and Mom cut them into squares, sewed them together, and made comforters, all by hand. The material was a heavy plush. Those comforters weighed a ton, but they sure were warm. They lasted for years.

Mom never coddled us kids, but she was always there if we were sick, or if we were in need of a nickel or a dime to buy some candy or ice cream. She was nearly as handy with a peach sprout as Dad when we needed it. We tried to help her as much as we could, but kids are inclined to get out of as much work around the house as they can.

Remembering back, we realize we should have shown more appreciation for all she did for us, but I am sure she understood.

THE FARM

I was born about a quarter mile west of the Junction, on the other side of Little Cedar Creek.

This happened to be in Keyser Township, and my older brothers and sister were supposed to go to school at Dutchtown, near Garrett. Dad wanted his kids to go to the Auburn schools and was able to get a transfer, at no cost, so they started school in Auburn. This arrangement lasted for

Perry Link, Callie Link and their child Glenn Link (three months old), 1904.

Helen Link, Glenn Link and Harold Link

Perry Link not long before his death.

Perry and Morris II Fat Guilford, local scions of Auburn Junction, Indiana

a couple of years and then the school officials decided not to issue any more free transfers. This didn't suit Dad one bit, so he bought a house up on Ensley Avenue before the next term started.

We had lived there several years when a small farm south of the Vandalia Railroad came up for sale and Dad bought it. With four growing kids to feed, he figured he needed more space to grow food, and besides, he had four kids to do most of the work. We kids didn't catch on to his reasoning so we were all excited about moving.

The farm was between the Vandalia Railroad and a small dirt county road, and was just a stone's throw east of the Junction. Across the road on the south was a farm that extended from Ditmars' Orchard on the east clear down to Stamates Town. This was owned by Pete Ankney and straight across the road from our house and barn was a small patch of woods. To me, that woods was the ideal place for huts, Cowboy-and-Indian games, pretending to be mountain men living off the land, and many other possibilities. With Ditmars' Orchard right beside the west side of the woods, we could visualize an unending supply of victuals.

These dreams were often interrupted when Dad gave us jobs to do and insisted they be finished before running off to play in the woods. We never could see why a tough old mountain man would have to do chores or weed the garden!

We had a large V-shaped garden west of the house with a couple big apple trees along the fence next to the railroad. This was always planted to peas, beans, beets, cabbage and carrots as soon as possible in the Spring and kept us busy in the summer. Of course, it fed our family all winter after Mom had all the surplus canned.

We had a large chicken coop and a fenced run north of the house out next to the outhouse. It was kind of fun, sitting there and hearing the hens cluck and the roosters crow just in back of you. The barn was just east of the house, with the well between the house and the barn. Naturally we had a basketball hoop on the end of the barn and had some good games out there. North of the barn was the corn crib. When we first moved there, it was a double crib with a wagon shed between the two. I don't remember whether it blew down or whether Dad tore it down, but we did end up

with a single crib. When Dad built this crib, he covered the support posts with tin to keep the rats out, but the rats must have been smarter than Dad, because we shot a lot of rats that made it into the crib.

North of the crib was the hog pen and lot. We raised a lot of pigs in this pen over the years, and they were the main source of our winters' meat. East of the barn and pigpen was our farm land, probably eight or nine acres which extended to John Dawkins' little house and his couple of acres of land. Every year our land was planted to something: corn, potatoes, berries, melons, hay, and one year Dad even tried a patch of buckwheat. He harvested the buckwheat and had it milled into flour. We ate buckwheat pancakes all that winter.

The house was a full two stories with a porch across the front room and a large maple tree in front of the porch. It shaded the whole porch in the summer. It was pleasant to sit there in the porch swing and watch what was happening down towards the Junction. Dad had a small stuffed deer he had shot on one of his trips to Maine hunting. He always kept it in the front room, but decided he would set it on the porch when we moved. I guess that deer sat there for several years, but finally got so black from coal smoke that Dad took it across the road and burned it up. John Dawkins happened to come along about that time and asked Dad if he was offering up a sacrifice so it would rain. We needed rain at the time.

The back porch was glassed in and was used as our utility room. Hangers were full of outdoor clothing and shoes, boots and galoshes were lined up underneath. Mom did the washing out there in the summer, but in the winter, the porch was used as our refrigerator, a good place to freeze and store most any perishable.

The cistern was under the trap door in the floor. This was where we got our soft water for washing clothes or for shampooing hair. With everyone burning coal, plus coal-burning steam engines on the railroad creating soot, by Spring the cistern water got a little black and had to be cleaned out. It usually turned out that the littlest kid got the job of crawling down into that cistern and scooping out the sludge that collected in the bottom and then washing down the sides real well. That was a miserable job, and I know just how miserable it was!

Mom always had a lot of flowers planted around the house. I remember she had lilies of the valley across the front. She had a big variety of other flowers, and they always grew well for her.

Dad had to put on a new roof one year, so he built up a scaffold to reach the second story. I was too small to do any of the work, except clean up on the ground, but when he wasn't around, I couldn't resist climbing up on the ladder and walking around on his scaffold. It's a wonder I didn't break my neck, but I guess someone looks after stupid, foolish kids, especially country kids.

The house had to be painted every two or three years and one year one of my brothers (either Glenn or Harold) was painting the dormer on the east side of the house and somehow spilled a gallon of pain down over the kitchen roof. I don't remember just what Dad said, but I am sure he had some comments that fit the occasion. The paint seemed to last better on that roof than it did on the house, because we had that mess up there for a number of years.

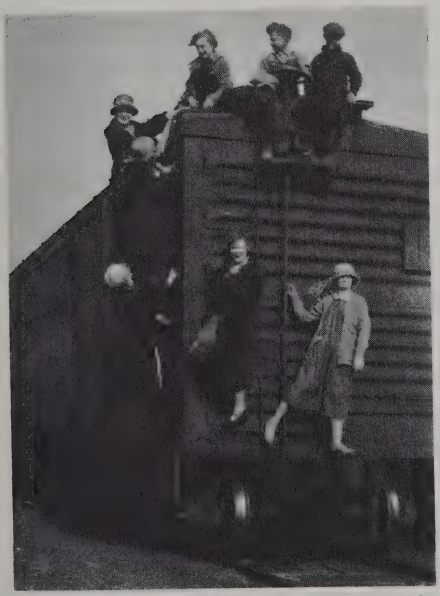
One other building we had on the farm was what we called "the shop." It was originally built for a granary, but Dad needed a place for tools, so it was used for a tool shop. I spent a lot of time in that shop, and even asked him to put a stove in so I could use it in the winter. He said "No way," and mentioned something about fool kids burning the place down. That was that.

After Dad started accumulating more farm machinery, he built an open-sided shed on the north side of the barn to store it under. I think that was the last building he built other than the garage when he got his first car.

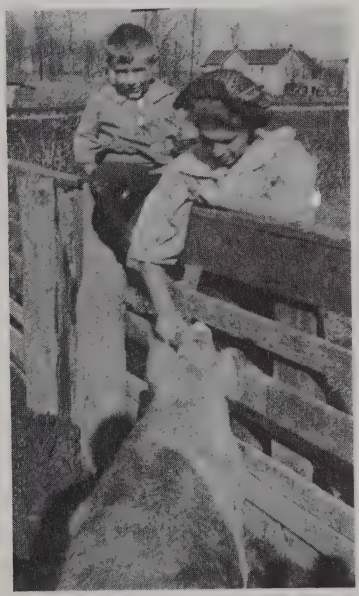
Our farm wasn't much of a farm as farms go, but it was comfortable and a good home. It did prove out Dad's original idea as a way to feed his family and keep his kids busy.

Mom Callie Link and Helen Link in the thirties.

Big brother Glenn and Floyd in the twenties.



Junction Kids delighted in pestering their older sisters.



Mother Callie and young Floyd feed the pigs ten-acre at the farm.

THE KITCHEN

Kids today think of kitchens as a place where their mothers prepare meals and where the refrigerator is stocked with all kinds of soft drinks. With all the electric ranges, toasters, crock pots, microwaves, dishwashers and garbage disposals, there is no reason to think otherwise.

Back in the Junction, kids thought the kitchen was one of the most important rooms in the house. If you could afford one of the big coal-burning, cast-iron ranges, people considered you quite well-to-do.

Our kitchen was a little small, compared to those of the larger farm homes, so we had to make do with what was called a "laundry stove" and a three-burner kerosene stove, but that laundry stove was the most important part of the kitchen, especially in cold weather.

It was only about twenty inches high, so Dad made a box out of six-inch boards and covered the box with tin to raise the stove safely to a more comfortable cooking level. It had an ash box and a round fire box that flared out to a square top with four round stove lids.

A kindling box and a coal bucket were always beside the stove and a fire shovel was there for daily cleaning of the ash box. The space under the stove was a good place to dry out wet shoes and there were usually a couple of pairs there all the time.

Keeping the kindling box and coal bucket full was a job for us kids. Getting coal was just a matter of going out to the barn, shoveling the bucket full, and carrying it back to the house; but filling the kindling box was another story. Dad insisted the kindling be a certain length and size. He would store any old boards in the barn and these had to be sawed with a hand saw and then split with a hatchet into small pieces to fit the stove.

In cold weather Dad would get up first, put a pile of kindling in the stove, wet it down with kerosene, put some coal on top, and soon have the kitchen warmed up in good shape.

Then Mom would get up and start breakfast, and Dad, after calling up the stairway to us kids, would go out and start doing the chores.

If you have never had to get out of bed in an unheated upstairs bedroom in zero weather, you have missed the number one way to wake

up in a hurry. We would go down those stairs three steps at a time to get behind that kitchen stove to dress in clothes we had left there the night before so they'd be good and warmed up before we put them on. We learned to appreciate that stove!

On wash day water was heated in a wash boiler, and on ironing days, the old cast sad irons were heated on the stove. On other days, the stove usually had the granite coffee pot, maybe a pot of vegetable soup, or stew, or maybe boiling beef, simmering and creating unforgettable aromas in the kitchen.

During hot weather, the three burner oil stove was used for cooking. On baking day, Mom would get out the old tin oven, set it over two burners and turn out baked goods of all kinds.

The only other equipment in the kitchen was a sink with a pitcher pump that pumped water from the cistern, a set of shelves for pots and pans, and the kitchen cupboard.

That cupboard would be considered an antique today and probably would be quite expensive to purchase. It had built-in sugar and flour bins and in the middle of the upper portion was a small door that closed off a set of shelves where all types of home remedies were stored to cure most any type of illness.

The water pail and dipper always sat on one end of the cupboard counter.

Even though fixtures in our kitchen were a little crude, the meals that were prepared there make today's TV dinners taste as though they were manufactured, instead of cooked.

STRAW TICKS

Anyone who has never had the pleasure of sleeping on a straw tick has missed an experience they would never forget. Most of the people of the Junction could only afford a store-bought mattress and springs for one bed and the parents usually slept on that. The kids slept on straw ticks.

Mom and Dad had a mattress on their bed and there was a feather tick on the spare bed when company came, but we kids all had straw ticks.

Mom would buy the ticking and sew up big bags to fit our beds and then Dad would hitch up the old horse to the spring wagon and make a trip to some farmer who was thrashing oats.

It seemed that oats straw was better filling than wheat straw for some unknown reason. It looked kind of strange to see three or four filled ticks tied on that spring wagon and an old white horse plodding down the road pulling it. It was exciting to us kids to think of sleeping on newly filled ticks.

When we got home, Mom had the job of sewing up the ends of the ticks and then we kids had a lot of fun trying to get them up the stairs and onto our beds.

When the beds were made, they were so high we sometimes had to climb on a chair to get into bed. The first few nights were a little rough and itchy.

We never knew what might have been in the straw when the bags were filled. Crickets were fairly common, but when we could feel one crawling in the tick, it was no problem. We'd just give them a pinch and they'd soon dry up and not cause any more trouble. A mouse was a different story! That required beating the tick with a broom or carpet beater and then opening the end and hunting through the straw until we found the little cuss. When we found him, he made a meal for the cat.

I don't know what would have happened if a garter snake had been sewn in with the straw, but I bet it would have caused a ruckus.

By the time it got real cold, we would have a cozy little hole packed down in the middle of the tick and with a couple of homemade comforters to cover us, it was the most comfortable place in the house. Of course, that was after we thawed out from undressing in an unheated upstairs bedroom!

To really appreciate how comfortable that bed was, there were those times when you had to make a rush trip out to the two-holer back of the house on a cold winter night . . . and found someone had left the door open. The seats would be covered with snow and the pages of the Sears Roebuck catalogue would be frozen together. You sure didn't linger

too long before making a mad dash back to that warm little nest in the old straw tick!

By spring, the straw would be packed down to the bed slats and that little nest we liked so well would have disappeared. We did have the consolation of knowing that when the oats were thrashed that summer, those ticks would be filled again and we would be able to form another warm little nest for the next winter.

Oh yes, it was quite an experience, sleeping on straw ticks.

ANIMALS

When we were growing up on our little farm, we always had animals around. Dad didn't believe in feeding anything that couldn't carry its own weight. So we had a cow for milk and butter, chickens for eggs and meat, hogs for meat, cats for the mice and rats, and dogs for hunting.

Dad would buy an old horse in the fall that some farmer was going to take to the tankage plant, feed it up over the winter and use it for cultivating the next summer. My brother brought home a billy goat one time, which did make Dad raise his eyebrows, but he let us keep it. My brother had to take all the care of it and had to cut all its feed during the summer.

When the crops were ready to cultivate, Dad would hitch up the old horse to the one-row cultivator, throw the reins over his shoulder and march along without having any trouble.

But when my brother had to cultivate, it was a different story: he just wasn't able to hold onto the plow and guide the horse at the same time, so I had to ride the horse and guide him while brother handled the plow. This worked out pretty well, but riding an old sway-backed horse with a high backbone for three or four hours was not the most pleasant job in the world.

After hearing all the griping and complaining every time we had to cultivate, my older brother came home one day with an old western

saddle someone had given him. It took some repair, but it made the job of cultivating quite a bit easier and more interesting.

Tom Mix was the popular movie cowboy at that time, so I could imagine I was riding the range while going up and down the corn rows. One day I had a pair of cap pistols in holsters on my belt and just as we finished the last row, I pulled both of them and let off a string of shots and a cowboy yell. It scared the old horse and he took off for the barn with the cultivators bouncing along behind. I hauled back on the reins, but it only seemed to make him go faster.

When we reached the barn, I could see that his stable door wasn't big enough for both of us, so I let loose of the saddle horn and jumped off. The manure pile I landed on was quite soft, so I didn't break any bones, but the cultivator didn't quite fit the door and ended up with a few bent and broken parts. I don't remember just what Dad said, but I'm sure it was a choice description about a damn fool kid.

We raised a lot of rabbits back then, both for food and to sell. Since there was no commercial rabbit feed on the market, it was our job to take a hoe and a bushel basket and dig dandelions for feed. When we cleaned the cages, we would spread the manure on the vegetable garden. With that fertilizer, we always had a good crop of vegetables.

Dad or my older brother took care of the butchering when the rabbits were ready to sell. As you can see, raising rabbits helped us out in several ways besides bringing in a little cash money at times.

We had an old white horse one year. My older brother was out in the barn shooting rats, and the horse was standing in his stable. A rat showed up, and Glenn pulled up and shot the rat. He got the rat all right, but the bullet went through the rat, through a pine board of the stall, and into the old horse's front leg.

It didn't seem to bother the horse, but it sure worried my brother. Dad was quite calm for a change when Glenn told him what he had done. Dad went out, looked at the horse, dabbed a little turpentine in the hole, gave Glenn a certain look, and went back in the house. It did not bother the

horse, but it did make us all think before we shot around the barn after that.

My brother's old billy goat turned out to be a lot of fun. Harold made a set of harness for him, found a pair of steel wheels and an axle and made a cart. He had quite a time teaching the goat to pull the cart, but Billy finally learned to obey the reins and we could drive him almost anywhere. We had that goat for quite a while, but Harold finally got tired of taking care of him and sold goat, harness and cart for (I think) two dollars. That didn't make Dad a bit mad, because he thought we kids were playing with the goat too much and not tending to our chores.

We never had any thoroughbred hunting dogs, but we always had a couple of hounds that would run rabbits. Their ancestry was a mixture of several breeds, but they did have long ears, so they were hounds to us. We had one problem with some of the dogs. They never wanted to stop hunting and come home with us. We could hear them barking across the B&O tracks for half the night. We never knew whether they were chasing rabbits or the female dogs that ran loose in the neighborhood.

One hound we had was a pretty fair 'coon dog. My brothers hunted quite a lot at night with that dog. A good 'coon hide would bring as high as three dollars and a possum hide would sometimes bring as much as fifty cents at the fur buyer's. They did earn a little spending money and had the sport of a 'coon chase.

My sister kept after them to take her along, and they finally said they would. I think they had it all planned beforehand, because they took her through all the brush and briar patches they could find.

Sis was really unhappy when they got home and was a little cool to her brothers for a long time. She never asked to go hunting with them again.

A TEMPORARY HAVEN

When my older sister was first married, she and her husband lived in Fort Wayne. One night they heard a scratching on the door and when they turned on the light, they saw a big 'coon trying to crawl in the transom over the door. When my brother-in-law opened the door, the 'coon walked in and made himself right at home.

They knew from the way he acted that he must be someone's pet, so they put an ad in the paper. When they didn't get any replies for a couple of days, they loaded him in the car and brought him to us.

Mom wouldn't let us keep him in the house, so we made his bed in the loft over the garage.

We had that 'coon for a couple of weeks before the owners finally tracked him to my sister and we gave him back. He was a friendly animal and would follow us around like a dog. We did have a few scraps to break up between him and the cats, but the cats soon learned to stay clear when he was around.

Animals were an important part of our young days, and we learned to respect them for what they did for us.

CROPS

Since we had animals to feed and less than ten acres to grow feed, Dad had to plan his crops very carefully. He still had to decide where to plant the crops to feed the family and if there was any space left over, he would figure out what would be the best crop to plant that would bring in a little cash. The first couple of years he made a few mistakes, but after that, everything seemed to work out fine and every inch of that little farm was planted to something.

We never had a team, just an old nag, so we had to hire someone who had the spare time to do the plowing, usually Pete Ankney. After the plowing and dragging were done, we would hitch up our old horse to the

"stone boat" and go over the ground to smooth out the surface.

When the ground was smooth enough to suit Dad, he would hitch a horse to a homemade four-row marker and mark the field both lengthwise and crosswise.

We always had a big field of corn. Well, maybe it wasn't "big," but it sure seemed like a big field when the kids had to plant, hoe and cultivate it!

We planted the corn with hand corn planters by walking up and down the rows and planting a hill wherever the marks crossed. It was surprising how fast we could plant with those planters. After we got into the rhythm, we could plant as fast as we could walk and never miss a hill. Usually we planted a few hills of pumpkin in the corn.

After a summer of being hoed and cultivated, the corn finally ripened and was ready to be cut and shocked. All our corn was cut by hand, eight hills square to the shock. We would start by tying the four center hills together to form a "horse," then the rest of the square would be cut and stacked against this horse. When the square was all cut and stacked, the top of the shock would be tied with a stalk of corn. This was hard and dirty work, but today a field of shocked corn brings back a lot of good memories.

After the corn had dried out, the shocks were torn down and the corn husked out by hand and hauled to the crib. The stalks were tied in bundles and stacked close to the barn for winter cow feed. We usually shelled out a couple of bushels to take to the mill to be ground into corn meal for family use, but the rest of the corn went to feed the stock.

We raised a field of oats nearly every year for stock feed. Dad had some farmer with a grain drill do the planting. He'd either pay to have it planted or would make a deal to help the farmer harvest his crops at harvest time.

When the oats were ripe, we'd get Pete Ankney to come in and cut the crop with his binder. It was our job to stack the sheaves in shocks for drying thoroughly. We paid Pete by working for him when he was ready to cut his grain.

When the grain was ready for threshing, Dad would contact a neighbor (one of the Smiths I think) who would bring his steam engine

and separator to do the threshing. Other farmers would bring their teams and hay wagons to help haul from the fields. It was common practice to pay for such help by trading labor and very few people welshed on these deals.

There was always a big meal served at noon prepared by the wives: chicken and all the fixings, vegetables, home-made bread, blackberry pies and spice cakes and plenty of coffee and milk and lemonade. It was a little hard to go back to work in the afternoon at times.

The straw was blown on a stack near the barn for bedding for the stalls. Our hay was cut and raked into windrows by Pete. He would bring his hay wagon and drive between the windrows while we pitched it onto the wagon with pitchforks. There would be one or two men on the wagon to make a nice square load.

It wasn't an easy job to pitch hay when the load got a little high. When the wagon was full, it was hauled to the barn and pitched into the haymow through a small door in the front of the barn. It was a hot and dirty job working in the mow moving the hay back to the ends and we kids tried to get out of that job whenever we could, but that wasn't too often in hay-making time.

Every year we had a patch of potatoes at different places on the farm. Dad figured we would need about forty bushels to last us over the winter, so he would lay out enough land to raise about that many, and he usually hit it pretty close.

The first couple of years, we would make furrows down the patch and then drop cut potatoes down the furrows and cover them using hoes. Soon, however, there was a hand planter on the market so we bought one. This had about the same action as a hand corn planter. It consisted of a piece of sheet metal pipe with a handle on the top and an alligator nose that opened when you pushed the planter forward. We would hang a bucket of cut potatoes on a strap around our necks, drop a piece of potato down the tube, step on the planter to push it into the ground, push forward to open the jaws, lift it out, then step on the hole to cover the seed. It looked

as though we were doing some kind of peculiar strut, something like a modern teenager's dance, but it did plant potatoes.

Digging in the fall was just plain old hand work. Going down those rows with a pitchfork and digging out those hills just wasn't our idea of a fun job, but it had to be done if we expected to eat when winter came.

The way we farmed was a little crude by today's standards. We only had that ten acres and there was no way we could afford to keep a team and buy better and more efficient equipment. But we made do by trading labor or hiring the heavy work done, and there was plenty of hand labor by us kids.

Dad was always good at telling us how important everything was and how we might get a little hungry during the winter if we didn't work in the summer.

You know, Dad had a way of explaining things that you seldom forgot. All that hand work didn't hurt us a bit, and we always had plenty to eat. And what we ate seemed somehow to taste better!

GRADE SCHOOL

In those days long before kindergartens and pre-schools were available for any but the most wealthy, a man's first experience in the larger social world began with First Grade.

My sister took me to school the first day and turned me over to the first grade teacher. I think her name was Bryant, and first my sister warned me to behave.

We went to the old Harrison building on Indiana Avenue. At that time, the school was an old red brick building with a crack running down the south side. The stairway inside was wood and the treads were worn about half way through from kids going up and down. Hob nail boots were popular then, and I suppose this had something to do with the heavy wear.

There was a steel fire escape from the second floor supported by two-inch metal pipes from the ground. These pipes were polished shiny and smooth, and we soon found out that it was because of the kids daring each other to climb to the top and slide down. Climbing the pipes was a good way to work off a little energy after sitting in school all day.

We walked from the Junction to and from school, about a mile and a half, every day and in all kinds of weather.

There was a sidewalk up Ensley Avenue and down Indiana and the older kids either rode bicycles or roller skated. I think I got my first pair of skates when I got to the third grade. I never did get enough money to buy a bicycle.

We carried our lunches in half gallon lard pails and our books over our shoulders with a leather belt around them.

The schools back then taught reading, writing and arithmetic, and all this started in the first grade. We did a lot of coloring, pasting and cutouts, pumpkins for Halloween, turkeys for Thanksgiving and Santa Clauses for Christmas. The teacher would paste our masterpieces in the windows in their season.

It was an honor to be chosen to take the erasers outdoors and beat out the chalk dust. I think teachers used this as bait to get a little better work out of the kids, and it did seem to help.

Most of the boys wore knee pants, and both boys and girls wore black stockings that came up above our knees. In the winter, we wore long underwear. We were a little rough on clothes and usually had a hole worn in the stockings with the white underwear showing through. That always made us a little self-conscious even though half the kids in school were in the same condition.

Junction kids usually wore a little rougher clothing than town kids, and they started calling us "Junction Trash," so we had to straighten them out. The principal, Mrs. Maginess, had us in her office quite often. The older kids had told us that she was really mean, but we found she was stern, but not mean. She did have a vicious looking paddle hanging in her office, but she seldom used it. I guess it was there to impress on the kids that she was the boss, and it usually worked

All the teachers in elementary grades seemed so much older than teachers today. Of course, anyone over twenty was considered an old person in those days.

I liked all the teachers in those first school years and got along as well as could be expected for a kid who had been raised in Auburn Junction.

I think it was in the second grade when we were going to school and stopped at a hickory tree to pick some nuts. We'd either crack them with our heel on the sidewalk to get out the goodies or would carry a pocket full to use as ammunition to pelt the other kids. I set my lunch pail on the ground to climb the tree to shake down more nuts. About that time we heard the first bell ring so everyone took off on the run. I scrambled down the tree, grabbed my lunch bucket, and spilled my lunch all over the sidewalk. We didn't have Saran wrap or plastic bags, so my unwrapped lunch was a dirty mess. When noon came, I didn't even go outdoors, and my teacher, Mrs. Green, asked what was wrong. I was usually the first one out at noon, so she knew something was wrong. When I told her what happened, she said I could go home and eat with her. She was a truly nice teacher.

The most important times of our school day were recesses, noon and dismissal. We worked off a lot of energy at those times and I think this was appreciated by our teachers.

Playing marbles was one of our popular games. You could buy a bag of clay marbles, or "commies," for a nickel, and glass marbles or "glassies" were about five for a dime. If you had a "glassie," you would set it up at two, three or four sidewalk blocks, depending on how nice it looked, sit down behind it with your legs spread out and let the other kids roll their "commies" at it. When someone hit it, he got to sit down and collect the "commies." When the bell rang, or when everyone was out of "commies," the kid behind the "glassie" was the owner. If you could roll "commies" accurately, or if you could talk a lot of the littler kids into playing, you could collect a lot of marbles.

Another phase we went through was sword fighting. The old Court Theater showed the silent movie *The Three Musketeers,* so we all made wooden swords and had some furious duels. This lasted until the fights got a little rough and someone complained to the teacher. She put a stop to the game and collected the swords.

Another popular, game was "King of the Hill." Out behind the school boiler room was a large pile of ashes, and when they froze, they made a nice solid hill. The idea was to stay on top of the hill while the rest of the kids tried to shove you off. This game created some pretty good tussles, but again the teacher put a stop to our fun because a few cry babies got skinned up a little.

Since we walked that far to school, we had to look for a shortcut. The one we found just happened to go by an orchard owned by Farmer Widney. After a hard day at school, those apples and pears tasted mighty good.

The biggest problem with school was trying to figure out how to get our work done without carrying a lot of books home. Homework cut into outdoor time too much. My folks were a little strict and if I had failed a grade or brought home a poor report card, I don't know what would have happened, but it wouldn't have been pleasant.

BUDDIES

We had a group of kids in the Junction who were about the same age, and most were interested in the things kids do when living in a rural community. We were always ready for a ball game or a hunting or fishing trip and most anything else we could think up. Most of us worked together in the onion fields and that was a good way to learn to get along. Kids that were not from the Junction had the idea we were a bunch of yokels and it was hard for them to fit in. I guess maybe we gave them too hard a time when they tried.

"Hoot" was a good, left-handed baseball pitcher. I think he learned to throw straight by continually practicing on the glass insulators on the railroad telegraph lines. The popular movie star at the time was "Hoot" Gibson and he tried to imitate his walk and talk, hence the nickname "Hoot." We didn't see eye-to-eye all the time and had some serious set-to's but we were always good pals and spent a lot of time together.

"Clit" was another good pal. Clit came from a large family, and all the boys were hunters who kept the family in wild game during the hunting seasons. Clit was always ready to go when hunting or fishing was mentioned. He went to a rural school instead of the Auburn schools and dropped out as soon as he was old enough and went to work. Later he went up to Indian River in Michigan and worked with his brother-in-law in the plumbing business. We kept in touch up until he was killed, soon after D-Day in World War II.

"Nellie" or "Cy" was a good ball player, but his Dad was a little strict, so he didn't get to run around with us all the time. Whenever he was there for a game, he either played second base or shortstop and, for a kid, could handle either position better than most kids his age do today. His folks had an old wind-up phonograph and Cy bought records that were popular back then. When we ran out of something to do, we'd go down to his house and listen to records. One of our favorites, as I recall, was about a fellow named Collins who got lost in a cave somewhere down in Kentucky. This had been the 1925 newspaper sensation; for days and even weeks Kentuckians and media people craned their neck inside the cave to see (in vain) if he were being found.

Other timely tunes we listened to were "Butter and Egg Man From the South," "You Can't Have the Key to My Cellar," and "Yes, We Have No Bananas," lots of sentimental World War I songs and some hymns.

"Fumbly" was loose-jointed and awkward and was the butt of a lot of our tricks, but he didn't seem to mind. His Dad worked for the railroad as a telegrapher and signalman in the tower at the Junction. He tried to teach some of us the Morse Code, but we had too many other things to do and never learned. Fumbly's Dad rode motorcycles and had a couple of junk cycles out back of his house. One had wheels still on the frame, but motor, gas tank, and everything else was stripped off. We would take this cycle back to a small hill back of his house, push it to the top, get on, and ride her down. It's a wonder we didn't end up with some broken bones, but a few scratches is all we ever got.

One day Fumbly said his Mom was going away and he had to stay around the house, but she said he could make taffy candy if he were careful. He got word to the rest of the bunch and we all went over to help. The way things went, his Mom made a bad mistake! We figured the taffy was ready to pull, so we dumped it out on a cookie sheet to let it cool a little. When we started to pull, we found we hadn't cooked it long enough and it was a big, sticky mess. Someone decided to see if a little ball would stick to the ceiling. It did. It wasn't long before we had the ceiling peppered with those little taffy balls. About that time, we all saw his Mom coming and we took off out the back door, leaving Fumbly alone in the kitchen. He got a good licking and the rest of us were careful not to be around his Mom for a long time.

"Poggin" lived down near the B&O freight office. He found a big, wide-brimmed cowboy hat somewhere and wore it all the time. One of the bad men in a Hoot Gibson movie was called Poggin and it was just natural that our friend got stuck with that nickname. His Dad worked at the gas plant and Poggin usually took his dinner over to him. We liked to go along because they'd let us take a shower in the men's clean-up room. That was much better than the old tin wash tub at home.

"Cricket" was one of our best ball players. He was small, but fast. It took a pretty good hitter to hit a ball past him when he was playing in the

infield. I never knew how, but he could bend his fingers back and touch the back of his hand. We all tried to do this but could never make it. Cricket had a couple of brothers who were also good ball players.

Kenny and Jesse were brothers, always ready for a ball game or a game of shinny. They were both outstanding athletes when they got into high school. We always figured the roughneck games we played in the Junction helped them out when they got some experienced training from their high school coaches.

"Stud" was a big, good-looking kid who always had his hair parted in the middle and slicked down with hair oil. He was big, so he was a good guy to have on your team just in case you needed some back-up in an argument.

"Skinny" lived down near Stamets town. His Dad bought junk and stored it back of his house until he got a big enough load to take it to the Auburn Junk Yard to sell. We used to find a lot of items in the piles that came in pretty handy. Wheels for building wagons and scooters were always popular, but if we could find an old iron rim from a wagon wheel, we really had something. We would make a tee-shaped pusher and run around pushing the wheel ahead of us. That was very popular with kids way back then.

There were a lot of kids in the Junction, some older and some younger, but you didn't seem to belong unless you had a nickname. I am sure anyone who lived there can remember most of them. There was Punch, Dady, Duck, Fuzz, Hog, Pap, Polack, Goldy, Sheeny and many more I don't recall.

I wouldn't say we were a wild bunch, maybe a little boisterous, but not wild. Maybe some parents would argue about that. We always played a little rough, but it was very seldom any one got hurt. If we didn't know the rules for a game, we made up our own rules and this sometimes caused a few differences. But a friend was a buddy and we usually settled our arguments after a bit.

HOME REMEDIES

In the early twenties, it seemed everyone had a favorite remedy for most any ailment. This was especially true in our little community of Auburn Junction and Mom and Dad were acquainted with, and used, most of them. If you mentioned to some of the older folk that you had an ache, or an itch, or a sore, they would always have a sure-fire cure. If you mentioned it to half a dozen people, you would have a half dozen different remedies and all of them would be the best for that particular ailment. One thing they all seemed to have in common was that the worse a remedy smelled, the more effectively it would cure!

It is easy to remember one popular remedy for preventing colds: the asafetida bag. This was the most stinking compound ever made, and as winter approached, we kids knew what we were in for. Dad would buy the asafetida at Hubbard's Drug Store in Auburn and Mom would sew up little cloth bags, about an inch square, and put in a chunk of asafetida, sew on strings, and we had to wear this around our necks.

Since this was a fairly popular remedy, after a few days in school about all you could smell was asafetida in the classroom, and you didn't know whether it was you or someone else.

We still got just as many colds, but our folks insisted we keep wearing them. I figured out a good place to hide the bag as soon as I got away from the house, but I was very careful to put it back on before I went home. That was a miserable remedy, but there were others just as bad.

For instance, there was skunk's grease. This was just what the phrase says, the fat from skunks rendered into a grease! With a lot of us kids and older boys trapping, a lot of skunks were caught. When we skinned them out, we were told to save all the fat and be careful not to get it dirty or contaminated. Then our folks fried it out and the grease was put in bottles. It always stayed kind of oily. This was rubbed on your chest or throat for sore throat and lung congestion. If smell could cure, it should have cured most anything in record time, but I never thought it made much difference. But we'd never let on it wasn't helping, because the NEXT thing Mom would try was a couple of drops of kerosene oil on a

spoonful of sugar. This was worse than the smell so we just kept quiet!

There were a lot of remedies for colds and most of them just smelled bad, but the one I always thought was invented by the devil himself was the mustard plaster. Mom would mix ground mustard and lard, spread it on a square of cloth, cover it with another square of cloth and tie it onto the chest. For a while, all you felt was a nice warm glow, but if you happened to go to sleep, you would wake up with your chest just about blistered. Even doctors in those days would prescribe mustard plasters. They might have helped sometimes, but the cure was usually worse than the ailment.

"Gam-Boge" pills were in our medicine cabinet at all times. We always made our own. Dad would get Gam-Boge at the drug store (this was a very potent cathartic powder) and mix it with a little lard, some flour, and some water, and then roll it up in little balls about the size of a small pea. He'd let them dry and, boy, if you felt a little bilious and took one of those little gems, you could figure on being cleaned out in a very short while.

For a rub-on remedy, we always had some lard and turpentine mixed up in a bottle. This was supposed to help any ache, pain, sore muscle or backache, and it might have helped some, but oh that smell!

We always had a tansy plant around the house somewhere. Mom would boil the leaves and make a poultice for cuts, boils and especially if we stepped on a rusty nail. This happened quite often as we all went barefoot during the summer. I think tansy might have prevented a lot of infections.

Naturally, we had a lot of herbs for making teas. Sassafras tea was for spring tonic to thin the blood after a long winter. Pennyroyal and catnip teas were supposed to be good for upset stomach, and if they didn't help, you would try peppermint tea. Catnip tea was given to babies for colic and did seem to help. I don't think any of these teas hurt us and they might have helped at times, but they didn't smell bad and most were rather pleasant tasting. I still enjoy a cup of sassafras tea in the spring.

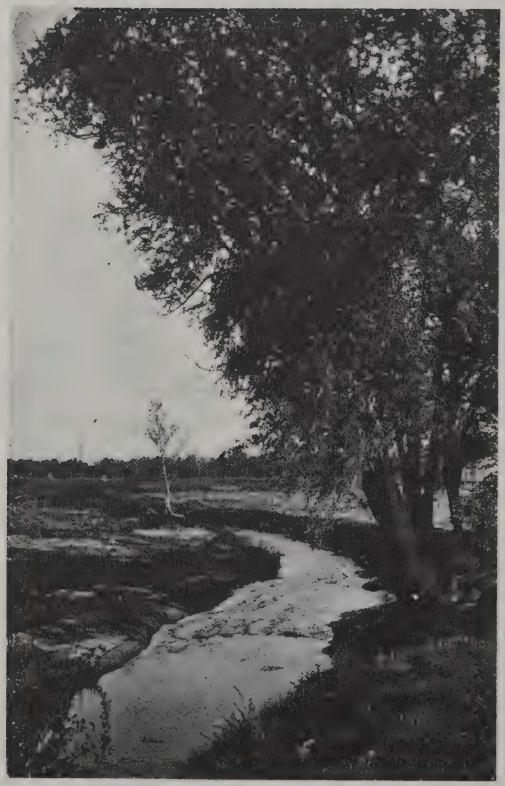
Another popular remedy was Balm of Gilead salve. A lady in the Junction made this salve every year. She would watch the cottonwood trees and when the little sticky buds started falling off, she would gather them, boil them up, and use the juice as the base for the salve. I don't know what

else she used. I guess it was kind of a secret. Everybody would get a jar from her and they all said it was pretty good stuff.

These are just a few of the old remedies our folks used. Some of them seemed to help a little. Some of them even tasted pretty good. But most of them just smelled to high heaven!

There is one thing about these old remedies. You at least knew their names. Today, if you are prescribed a medicine, you would have to have a medical school education to know what it was . . . and it would probably turn out to be about the same as one of those old remedies.

THE CRICK



The creek west of the Junction was two branches that joined just north of the B&O bridge. One branch came in from the west and the other from the north. It flowed south and east and emptied into "Big Cedar" Creek south of Auburn. It was called "West Creek" or "Little Cedar" but to us kids it was just plain "crick."

My first recollection of the crick was my Dad and brothers making a seine out of chicken wire with a log chain wired to the bottom and a pole on each end. They'd go down to a pool just below the garden of the house where I was born and seine suckers in the spring. I was just learn-

ing to walk and I would tag them down to watch. Mom would miss me and call to Dad and he would send me back to the house.

In later years that same pool (we called it the "Sycamore") was always a good place to catch rock bass, chubs and maybe a smallmouth and suckers in the spring. In those early days, the crick was clean and clear, but in later years it became polluted from the tankage plant and the fish were unfit to eat.

The Junction kids always had a hut built down along the crick somewhere. The dump was close and gave us an unlimited supply of building materials. There was plenty of tin for the sides and roof, stove pipes for chimneys, boxes and crates for seats and cupboards, and even a supply of cooking utensils, used after we'd scoured them out with sand.

Some of these huts were pretty popular with the old-time hobos who traveled the B&O freight trains back at that time. We enjoyed sitting around and listening to them tell of their experiences. We kids decided that when we got older, we would go hoboing, but we never did, although one time I jumped onto a box car that was switching on the Vandalia siding in back of our house. Dad saw me, snatched me off, and proceeded to teach me that riding on box cars was not for kids. I ate a few meals standing up. Dad sure knew how to drive home a lesson so it would not be forgotten.

Often the hobos would talk us kids into scrounging up the makings for a stew. We could count on Henry Harris giving us a soup bone, and the neighborhood gardens were an easy source of vegetables if we didn't get caught. We thought these stews were the best we ever ate. Of course, we would eat most anything, but the idea of eating down along the crick in a hut we had built with a group of hoboes helped the taste.

Kids just can't hang around a crick without having a swimming hole. Ours was down near the Lakeshore Railroad bridge. There was a big cottonwood tree just south of the bridge with roots that extended out about three feet over the crick. This made a good place to jump in. We called it diving, but since the water was only a couple of feet deep, we had misnamed it. Diving did sound better than jumping. I often wondered what the people in the passenger trains thought when they went by and saw a bunch of kids skinny dipping in the crick.

This was where we learned to swim. When there was high water from a heavy summer rain, we would take off for our swimming hole. We could jump in and the high, fast water would carry us downstream until we ran into a bank at the bend below the swimming hole.

The water was so fast, it was only necessary to keep your head up and paddle and kick a few times before you hit the bank. You had to stay in the middle of the stream or you might get pulled under the brush along the banks, which could have been disastrous. We were having too much fun to worry much about that!

Liza Werntz was a widow lady who owned the farm along the crick where we swam. She had a big flock of geese. Someone suggested we catch one, tie a rope around its neck, and see whether it would pull us down the crick. We finally cornered one, but it was stronger than we were so we discarded that idea. Instead we slipped up in the barn and collected a hatful of goose eggs. We made a hole in each end, blew the insides out and floated them down the crick to shoot at with our slingshots.

When we were down by the crick, we always had a fish line and some hooks in our pockets.

The west branch was the best fishing, with a lot of log jams and deeper holes, but the county decided to dredge it out and ruined the fishing. Dredging changed all the bends, removed all the log jams and cleaned out all the stumps, and it ended up a straight ditch. It wasn't an interesting place to play anymore.

Big Cedar Creek ran through Auburn and south under the B&O Railroad. It was about a mile from where we lived, so we never spent much time there, but one trip I do remember.

We decided to build a canoe. In those days, most barrels had wooden hoops instead of steel, so we went down to the dump and collected a lot of these hoops to cut apart to use for ribs.

The old "Double Fabric Tire Company" used a lot of canvas in their process, so we went up to their dump and dug out enough odd pieces to cover the frame.

We had to do a lot of hand-sewing, but we finally got it covered. Next we went over to the gas plant and got a pail of tar and gave our canoe

a couple of good coats. We stood around and congratulated ourselves on what a nice job we had done.

We even started discussing various trips we would probably take in this canoe. When we tried to pick it up, it was all two of us could do to lift it. Anyway, after making a couple of paddles, we decided to take it down to Big Cedar to launch. We finally got it down to the creek and it did float pretty well. We decided to go down-stream instead of trying to paddle up-stream, so we took off. We went along fine for about the first mile, but the current started getting swifter and swifter and around a bend we saw a tree that had blown down across the creek. We were going too fast to stop. The nose went under that tree and the canoe filled with water and sank like a rock. We managed to get up on the tree and over to the bank, but we never did see the canoe. As far as we know it might have ended up in the St. Joe River.

We thought we had a fairly good trip down the creek but we also had a long walk home. We kept talking about building another canoe, but we never got around to it.

They were building a dance hall west of the Junction on the old Auburn-Garrett Road and we'd hang around and watch. When they put down the hardwood dance floor it had to be sanded smooth. Somehow I got the job following the sander and sweeping the sanding dust out of the way. This paid the enormous sum of two dollars for three days work.

I spent the whole wad on a steel casting rod and reel I had seen in the catalogue. You couldn't cast with it, and it wasn't much of an outfit, but being the only kid with a store-bought rod and reel let me make some pretty good trades by letting the other kids use it for a while.

There were so many things we could do down at the crick to keep us busy. In the winter, we would spend a lot of time skating and usually came home with wet feet from going through the thin spots. Then there were turtles to hunt, clams to dig, frogs to shoot with our slingshots, and just lying on a grassy bank in the sunshine, thinking about what we would do when we were grown up, if we ever made it that far.

The crick was an important part of growing up in Auburn Junction.

POCKET KNIVES AND OTHER NECESSARY ITEMS

It seems that men today just don't consider pocket knives as essential as the old timers did back in the Junction. They all carried knives and could do so many little jobs with them that they were more of a tool kit than a pocket knife. In the evenings, sitting on the bench by Henry's Store, was the time for whittling and discussing the news of the day and what county officials did or did not do. The bench-sitters seldom made anything except shavings or maybe a toothpick, but it seemed to have a calming effect so the pros and cons never got too belligerent.

Every once in a while someone would stop whittling long enough to cut a chew off his tobacco plug. When apples were in season, they'd try to see who could make the longest, unbroken peeling. Then, since some of these old timers were a little delicate, they would slice off bits of the apple before they'd eat it.

Someone usually had a whetstone, so they would take turns sharpening their knives and show each other how they could shave the hair off the back of their hands. Junction men were proud of their knives and asking to borrow one was in bad taste. They had to have a real good reason to let the pocket knife out of their hands for even a few minutes!

With the importance our dads placed on a good pocket knife, it wasn't too hard to talk them into letting us kids carry one at a fairly early age. Of course, with the permission, there were some very pointed instructions on what and what not to do with them, and a promise of some very unpleasant consequences if we didn't use them in the right way.

A Barlow was considered a good knife, but to us kids, a Case was considered the Cadillac. If we couldn't raise the price of a good knife by selling rags and iron to the junk man, we would have to settle for one from the "Five & Ten."

There were so many things to do with a knife besides just whittling. We could cut and carve some very fancy sling shot crotches. We could carve fancy designs on our "shinny" sticks, make little toys, make fishing bobbers, whittle out bows and arrows and carve our initials on beech trees. I believe if those beech trees were still around today, they would show a fairly good

history of the Junction's kids.

Since there were no radios or TV, we had to devise our own entertainment, and "Mumblety-Peg" was one of the best ways to while away our spare time. The one whose knife was being used set the rules for the game and there were so many variations that the game never got tiresome.

The one thing we tried to outdo each other on was making corn cob pipes. We would sort through a lot of corn to find just the right size and color. We went so far at times as to shell a pail of corn for the chickens, hoping to find an outstanding cob. The cob was cut to the right length, the pith was bored out and the outside pared down with just enough left to make a nice design. At times we would dye the outside with pokeberry juice or walnut hulls and we were ready for the stem. We'd search for the right size elderberry limb, poke the pith out with a piece of baling wire, stick it in the side of the bowl and we were ready to fire up like the old timers. We could always find some corn silk, but coffee wasn't too bad, either. We made some pretty fancy pipes with maybe only a few cut fingers.

Parents today would probably throw up their hands at the thought of allowing their kids to carry pocket knives, but back in the twenties they were a part of growing up. Even though we got a few cuts now and then, we learned to respect what a good knife could do (and also what our dads could do if we didn't use them properly)!

BUTCHERING

Most all the families in Auburn Junction raised from one to four pigs for their winter meat. When it started getting cold in the fall, they would usually set up a day for butchering. They would let their neighbors know when it was to be so they could be there. If they didn't have all the equipment they needed, they could always borrow from someone. You could always figure on working a full day, usually from dawn to dark, depending on how many hogs were to be butchered.

Dad had two big black iron kettles and these were hung on a pole across two saw horses and filled with water the night before. Filling the

kettles was a job for us kids, and when you pump and carry the water to fill those huge items, you were *READY* for bed. Dad would get up before dawn, light the fire and the water would be boiling by daylight when we were ready to start.

We had an old oak barrel, set up at an angle with a platform built in front, and this was filled about half full of the boiling water. I think Dad used to put in a handful of lime to help loosen the hair, and then we were ready for the first pig.

The pig was killed and lifted to the platform and a couple of husky men would douse it up and down in that hot water until the hair was loosened. When the hair was loosened just right, it was pulled out on the platform. The men took scrapers and in short order, that pig was as bare as a newborn baby.

Next, the pig was hung by its back legs on a three pole tripod and hoisted up with its snout just clearing the ground. Then the men, with sharp razor blade knives, shaved every hair that was left and washed the carcass clean. It seemed all the men took great pride in how clean and smooth they could make a carcass before it was cut up. The head was removed and set aside to be cleaned and cooled to be cut up for head meat and souse. The tub was placed under the carcass and the carcass was split down the middle. The "innards" were dropped in the tub and set aside. The carcass was split down the back, the whole thing washed thoroughly and set aside to cool.

The hearts and liver were separated and hung up on the side of the barn to cool. The rest of the tub's contents were the women's job. They separated and cleaned the casings to be stuffed with sausage. Usually one of the stomachs was cleaned to be stuffed with sausage for a special meal. If some farmers had a taste for tripe, all the stomachs would be cleaned and later pickled. This never seemed like a very pleasant job to me, but it had to be done, and the women did it.

When the carcass was thoroughly cooled, it was ready to be cut up. Hams, shoulders and bacon were cut and trimmed. All the fat was separated and cut into small chunks to be rendered into lard. The rest of the meat was cut up to be ground into sausage. Dad always put the tenderloins

in the sausage, so we seldom had pork chops, but we did have awfully good sausage. About all that was left was what we called "bony meat" or ribs, backbone and feet. These had to be eaten first if the weather warmed because we had no way to preserve them.

Hams, shoulders and bacon were put in large crocks and covered with brine that would float an egg. After a certain time, they were taken out and smoked. The sausage that wasn't smoked was fried out, put in smaller crocks, covered with lard and the tops covered with cloth. The crocks were then stored in the cellar.

After all the pigs were scalded, the iron kettles were scrubbed out and all the cut-up fat was put in and cooked until all the lard was cooked out. When the skin on the pieces of fat showed little blisters, the lard had cooked long enough. The old lard press was cleaned up well after being used to stuff the sausage. Crocks, buckets and cans were all scalded and dried. We were ready to press out the lard. Cloth bags were placed in the press, the lard was dipped from kettle to press, the top press was screwed on, the handle cranked down, and all the lard was squeezed out of the "cracklins."

Most of the kids would gather around when lard was being pressed. If we could talk Dad into giving us the pig tails or some little chunks of tenderloin, they would go into the lard kettle and in a short while, everyone would be eating French fried meat. All the kids would go home with a sack of cracklins. By the next day, most of us were a little bilious from eating too much grease.

When the lard had cooled, the containers were covered and stored in the cellar.

Dad's smoker was two barrels with the heads knocked out, one set on top of the other. There was a little door cut in the bottom barrel and a cast iron pot was put inside for the fire. The pot was filled with coals from the heating stove and green wood, usually hickory, was piled on top to make smoke. The sausage was hung over a couple of slats in the top barrel and the top was covered with a piece of "gunny" sack. In a day or two, it was thoroughly smoked and hung in the back porch for use over the winter.

Our cellar was an interesting place to visit. Besides the smoked hams and shoulders hanging from the beams, there was usually a quarter

of beef lying on the ledge. The shelves were all filled with canned vegetables, fruits and jams and jellies. There would be a big bin filled with potatoes, crates of apples and pears and even a sixteen-gallon keg of grape wine.

Even though we never had much cash, we never went hungry. As they say, we ate pretty "high on the hog."

THE CANNING FACTORY

Auburn Junction had two industries that helped the ladies of the area add to their chicken and egg money: the kraut factory and the canning factory. Women at the junction appreciated the luxury of having their vegetables and fruits canned in tins and paid to have this done. Kraut was canned at a company owned by an outside firm. Both the canning and kraut factories hired quite a few women when cabbage and vegetables were ready to be processed. This was seasonal employment, but was appreciated by anyone able to work.

Charlie Gillette started the canning operation in an empty tabernacle building up on Ensley Avenue. It was known as "The Gillette Custom Canning Kitchen," and was very crude at the start. Everything was done by hand. Even the lids of the cans were soldered by hand.

The cost of canning ran from three cents to five cents per can, depending on whether the produce was brought in ready to can or whether it had to be prepared at the cannery. Meat was a little more, as it had to be prepared and was canned in larger cans.

Business was brisk, and the original building was soon outgrown. After a while, the old creamery at the Junction went out of business and the building was up for sale. The creamery was quite an old operation. They handled the milk from the area and made ice cream, churned butter and ran milk deliveries for the community's people. I suppose the larger dairies put them out of business.

Charlie bought this building and moved his canning operation from Ensley Avenue into it. He added a lot of new machinery to make the

job more efficient. The main piece he added was an automatic capping machine that crimped the lids on the cans. It added water to filled cans, too. Charlie was always coming up with new ideas, but it still took the women to prepare the vegetables.

Some of his customers would bring items like peas or beans in already prepared, and all that had to be done was fill the cans, cap and process them in the steam retorts. Other items, like tomatoes and beets, had to be scalded, peeled, cut up and then put into cans and sealed. Corn was cut off the cobs by hand for a while, but Charlie finally put in a machine to do this job. This machine caused some customer complaints because pieces of cob got into the canned corn, but he finally got the machine working correctly and the complaints stopped.

After the cans were sealed, they were stacked in large metal baskets and lifted by chain hoists and put in the retorts. The steam was turned to a certain pressure and the cans processed for the correct length of time. Charlie had worked out the right time and pressure for each item and never had too many complaints about vegetables not being cooked right. When the cans were cooled, they had to be sorted and returned to the customer's correct container.

When the produce was brought in, each container was tagged. A number was stamped on each tag, along with the customer's name and the kind of produce. The bottom half of the tag was given to the customer as a claim check. The number of that tag was stamped on the can bottoms when they were filled, then used to sort the cans after processing into the correct containers. This was important, as there were no labels on the cans, and it was the only way for the customer to tell what was in the cans when they were taken home.

It was a little crude by today's standards, but it did work and there were very few complaints about mix-ups. In the late fall, a lot of pumpkins were canned, but the main item at that time was beef. Charlie didn't do any butchering, so the beef was usually brought in by the quarters. The meat was cut off the bones, cut in chunks, the cans filled by hand, sealed and processed. Bones were cooked in a large kettle and then the broth was processed. The bones were burned in the steam boiler.

Sometimes Dad would bring home bones and Mom would clean off all the bits of meat to make mincemeat to can for winter. The pies she made from this mincemeat didn't last very long at our house.

The canning factory was important to the people in the Junction and to the people of the surrounding area before the days of the home freezers and refrigerators. I can imagine that anyone who lived in the Junction at that time can remember taking produce to the Gillette Custom Canning Kitchen.

THE KRAUT FACTORY

The kraut factory at Auburn Junction was owned by the Wabash Canning Company and was used for processing sauerkraut. They would contact farmers in the area to grow cabbage and would furnish plants in the spring when planting time came. They didn't seem to have any trouble getting the acres they needed, and the farmers seemed satisfied, because this gave them an income they could count on.

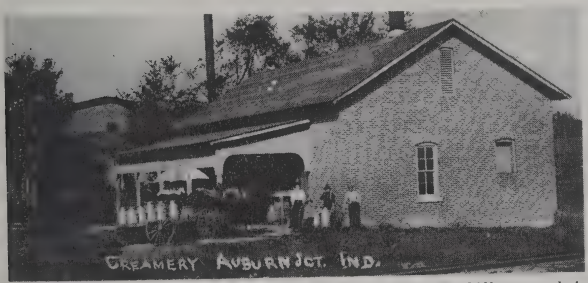
When the cabbage was ready to harvest in the fall, it was delivered to the factory, usually by teams and wagons.

The factory had a long wooden building with bins down each side where the cabbage was unloaded. There were two conveyors down the center of the building, one on top of the other. Along each side were coring machines operated by women. These machines were similar to a drill press. The bit had a small blade on the end to chew out the core.

The operators would take the cabbage head from the bin, clean off the outer leaves, then push the head onto the bit. The head was then tossed on the top conveyor to be carried to the cutter. The leaves were dumped on the bottom conveyor to be carried to a waste pile outside the building. The farmers would haul this waste back and dump it on their fields. There were no safety guards on the machines, and Dad used to come home and tell about women getting their sleeves or hair caught, often with some bad and painful cuts.

If O.S.H.A. had been around back then, this operation would have been shut down real fast! The cored heads were conveyed to the second

Annie Krumloft's Restaurant and Boarding House was the home of the deep-dip ice cream cone.



The old creamery. After it went out of business, Charlie Gillette made it into a custom cannery.

Floyd looks very small against such a large Kraut Factory in Auburn Junction.

(L) "Speck" Howard Allen, manager of the Kraut factory, and Perry Link.

floor of the main building and were fed into cutters. The cut cabbage dropped onto wooden trucks which were then wheeled to one of the trap doors over each vat on the first floor and dumped.

The vats were about ten feet in diameter and about ten feet deep. They had to be thoroughly cleaned and then given a good coat of melted paraffin before they were ready for the cut cabbage.

When the cabbage was dumped, several men in rubber boots would level it out across the vat, salt it, and then tramp it down. Another layer was dumped, leveled, salted and tramped until the vat was full. Then a large wooden cover was placed on top and weighed down with big concrete blocks. The kraut was then allowed to cure, a process which took about four weeks.

Chewing tobacco while working in the pits was strictly forbidden, so the men started to chew paraffin. Guess this is where Dad got the habit which lasted nearly the rest of his life.

After the kraut was cured, the vats were opened and the kraut forked out into oak barrels, which were shipped to Wabash for canning.

The company had a team of white mules and a wagon to use around the plant for odd hauling jobs. They were stabled in our barn for a while, and when the plant closed, my brother drove this team back to Wabash. He was three days getting there, but back then, that was pretty good time.

The plant was empty for a while, then it was cleaned up and used to process dill pickles. I think the same kind of contracts were made with farmers to raise pickles. Pickles were processed in the old cabbage vats and then transferred to oak barrels and rolled out in the yard to finish curing. We kids soon found we could knock out a bung and fish pickles out with a piece of wire. If we didn't get caught, it was a common sight to see kids walking around munching on pickles almost any time.

Pickle-processing didn't last too long, and the buildings sat empty with the doors locked. The Junction kids quickly found an opening that had been overlooked, and this made a wonderful place to play hide-and-seek and other games we hadn't even named yet. Someone came up with the idea of playing basketball on the second floor. Morrison (Fat) Guilford had

been hired as a kind of watchman for the buildings, so we talked him into letting us put up a couple of baskets, but he warned us not to tell anyone or he'd lose his job.

We bent some half-inch rods into hoops, sewed on a couple gunny sacks with the bottoms cut out for nets, bolted these to a couple of old doors and mounted these contraptions on a couple of posts. We were ready to play. Our old ball was in pretty sad shape from barnyard playing, so we talked the high school coach into giving us an old ball.

We had enough Junction kids, large and small, to make up two teams, and we had some wild games. You can imagine. No referees. We tried to be careful not to fall down too often because the floor was just about worn out from steel wheels from the cabbage truck and was full of splinters. We did spend a lot of time picking splinters out of our knees and hands.

We had a lot of good games, but some kids got to playing with the old cabbage trucks and busted out several windows, so Fat kicked the whole bunch out and spoiled our basketball court.

The old brick building, though, is still standing, and is used by the county for storage, a rather mournful memento (to me) of a time gone by.

THE GAS PLANT

Back in the twenties, the old gas plant in Auburn Junction was a great attraction to us kids. We always tried to be around to watch the railroad unload coal cars. The railroad siding ended in a long ramp about fifteen feet high and the trains backed the coal cars up this ramp, opened the doors in the car bottoms and dumped the coal in a pile under the ramp. We were all waiting for the trainmen to push a car off the end of the ramp but they never did.

Inside the main building there was a row of coke ovens along one side. These ovens were three high, and, as I recall, there were about twelve to fifteen altogether. The men would go to the coal pile with a steel truck, shovel it full, and push it back to the oven that was ready to be recharged.

The sides of the truck dropped down for easy shoveling, and the coal was shoveled into the ovens.

This was all hand work, and it took some pretty good men to handle the job. Two men worked together and we always liked to watch them shovel the coal into a two-foot square opening (about head high in the top row of ovens) and never miss a stroke or spill any coal on the floor. They took great pride in their ability even though the job was hot, hard and dirty.

When the gas had all burned out of the coal, all that was left was red hot coke. This was pulled from the ovens with long steel hoes and drenched with water. Then it was shoveled back in the truck and hauled to the storage pile and dumped. By that time another oven would be ready to recharge and this is the way it went for a full shift.

The coke was sold to people in the area for heating. If you owned a hard coal stove or a coke stove, it was much cleaner than coal and it made a hotter fire. You had to be careful using it in a regular coal stove or you would melt the firepot.

The men had rigged up a shower to clean up before going home. They'd let the Junction kids use it if the boss wasn't around.

The coke ovens were fired around the clock. I can't recall whether there were two shifts or three, but I would guess there were only two as a twelve-hour shift was common back in those days. There were only two reasons for them to shut down. One was to replace the fire brick or make repairs, and the other was to regulate the amount of gas needed to keep the tanks full.

The coal gas was pumped into two large storage tanks and piped from there as far as Kendallville, Garrett, Waterloo, and Auburn.

These tanks were about forty to fifty feet in diameter and when full, were fifty to sixty feet high. They were built in two sections. The top half was set inside the bottom half in a channel filled with water. As the gas was pumped in, the top would rise and the water would keep the gas from leaking out. The weight of these steel tops also kept the pressure more or less constant in the gas lines.

THE BERRY PATCH

I recently spent a short time in one of today's "U-Pick" strawberry patches. They gave me a specially made corrugated tray and took me out to the field. The spaces between the rows were covered with a thick layer of straw that gave the impression of walking on a well-padded living room carpet. The ends of the tray were even slanted so it could be pushed over the straw like a little sled while you were picking. I expect by next year someone will have developed a computer controlled device that will point out the ripest and sweetest berries for the pickers.

It was quite different on our farm back in Auburn Junction in the twenties. If you called it a "strawberry farm" or "strawberry acres," or any of the modern names, people would think you were a little stuck up. To everyone it was just plain old "berry patch."

Dad would order plants from a nursery supply house. Between ordering and receiving, he would work the ground with our old white horse until it was nearly as smooth as a billiard table. He would mark out the rows with an old one-shovel garden cultivator and two stakes. He would sight over those stakes while pushing the cultivator across the field and make rows as straight as if he had used string. When we tried it, our rows looked as if they were made by someone who had indulged in a little too much of the local home brew.

When the plants arrived, the back-breaking job of planting would begin. Dad made up several of what he called "planters." These were just a piece of four-inch board, beveled on one end with a cleat nailed across at the proper depth for the plant. This we would step on to make the hole. There was also a mark across the board to measure the distance between each plant.

Dad did enjoy seeing a well-planted field, but we kids could only see a summer of hoeing, weeding and cultivating. Dad insisted we do all these jobs right, but he was fair. If it didn't suit, he gave us two choices: go do it right or muck out the cow stall.

We could usually get a few berries off the new patch the first summer, but serious picking commenced the next summer. We would pick off a patch for two years, then Dad would plow it up. To have a crop to pick every year, we'd have to plant a new patch every other year. To us kids, this was just a lot of work, but to Mom and Dad it was cash income.

When the berries were ready, Dad would hire teenaged girls from the Junction to come in and pick. Dad always said girls made better pickers than boys and didn't horse around as much. They were paid three cents a quart and containers had to be heaped up. Of course, Dad expected his kids to pick for free and this sometimes caused problems, especially on a nice warm day when we would rather have been swimming.

It was embarrassing to have a bunch of teenaged girls outpick me and to have them always ahead going down the rows, and I'd heave a few rotten berries their way now and then.

I heard later that some of the girls' mothers wondered why they sat down on so many rotten berries. It didn't take long for the pickers to learn to squat rather than stoop when picking in Dad's patch, especially when Dad wasn't around.

Mom would always sort the berries and pick out everything that was small or deformed and then heap up the boxes before they were sold. We kids bellyached a lot because we always had the culls to eat and never got any of the good berries. Mom's standard answer to this was that this was a cash crop and anyone who paid cash for something deserved the best. I guess she was right, because she always had more orders than she could fill.

Before we had a car, Mom and one of my brothers would hitch up the old horse to the spring wagon, load the berries and deliver them to her Auburn customers. It only took a short time to get rid of any extra berries they might take along. Fifteen cents a quart was a good price, and if you could get twenty-five cents, you considered it a very good year.

The kids in the family were always glad when the strawberry season was over, but Dad could usually find work for us. For example, we had an everbearing red raspberry patch which needed pruning, hoeing, weeding

and cultivating. We got a spring and fall crop, but the fall crop brought a little better price. Mom would take them up to Schaab's and Kuhlman's stores and sell all we could pick at twenty-five cents a pint.

Dad was proud of his berry patches. Since he had three boys to do the work (if they didn't sneak off), the patches were always kept in good shape.

I guess it didn't hurt us any, because after we got out on our own, we worked harder and under tougher bosses than Dad and often thought it might be better if we were back on the old farm!

THE MELON PATCH

Dad's pride and joy was his melon patch. Even though we only had a scant ten acres and had to grow food for the family and animals, he could always find a place for melons. Like the berry patch, melons could be a cash crop and food for us too.

Since the melon patch was Dad's pet, he was very particular about everything connected with planting and tending the patch. The best manure from the cow stable was used for each hill, and each hill had a few extra seeds in case some might not grow. After they came up, sprouts were thinned down to three or four of the strongest plants.

Then there was a summer of cultivating and weeding, most of it done by us kids, but carefully supervised by Dad. A close watch was kept for the little striped beetles that fed on the plants' leaves. If we found any, the whole patch would get a dusting of lime or a spaying of arsenate of lead.

We all sweated a lot taking care of that patch, but we knew when the melons ripened, eating them would be worth all the effort!

When the melons were ready to pick, Mom and my brother would cover the floor of our one-horse spring wagon with straw, load it up with melons and peddle them up and down the streets of Auburn. We never had any trouble getting rid of all they had in the wagon. Since Dad supervised the picking, people knew they would be getting good melons at the right price.

In the fall, when the melons were ripe, he would invite all his cronies and everyone else in the Junction to come have a melon feast. He figured if he did this, the Junction folk would leave the patch alone. It worked. We never had any trouble with kids or anyone else helping themselves to melon.

This wasn't as much fun for us kids as raiding a melon patch, but there were other patches in the area to be raided. Melons seemed to taste best that way.

One year Dad went down to the patch to see if any melons were ready to pick and found some of the biggest plugged. Some vines were pulled up and several of his biggest melons were gone. He was in a foul mood when he told us about it and declared he'd fix whoever did it.

For the next several nights, he sat behind a stump next to the patch with the old twelve gauge loaded with black powder shells. After about a week, he saw two men walking down the road. They went by the patch and looked the house over to see if anyone was up yet. They seemed satisfied and turned around and came back to the patch. Dad let them get in the patch and just as they stooped over to check the melons, he let fly with two shots right over their heads. If you're not expecting it, two shots of black powder, which throw a flame at least six feet long, and smoke you can't see through, can be intimidating. You get out of there as fast as you can, and that's just what those interlopers did. I can still hear Dad laugh when he told how fast they took off. We never did find the culprits, but one stepped in a hole where a tile had washed out and we did notice a young fellow down in Stamates Town who was walking around on a crutch a couple of days after that. I don't recall any more trouble, though.

SPORTS AND GAMES

There were no organized sports for the kids back in the Junction, so we had to make up our own rules for the games we played. Our rules didn't include too many penalties, so our games got a little rough at times.

"Shinny" was a popular game both winter and summer. This was a crude form of hockey without all the rules and penalties. We spent a lot of time hunting for "shinny" sticks. The most popular, if we could find them, was one of the old curved wooden bows from a one-horse buggy top. These got to be pretty scarce, so we would search the woods for a sapling with the right curve on the root and the right size for the handle, dig it up and trim the branches. We'd decorate it with our pocket knives and were ready to play. Our puck was usually one of the small Pet milk cans. It was dangerous to get hit with that puck after it had gotten banged up a little, but that just added to the spice of the game.

I think it was called "shinny" because everyone had bumps and bruises on their shins when the game ended.

Baseball was always popular. Ted Fisher, Les Zolman and the Scots, Everett and Walter, were area men who played in the big leagues at one time and were the idols of the kids. The old Robbins ball park had some really good games, especially if the Auburn and Garrett teams were playing.

Most of the small towns had teams. They would all try to sneak in professional players if they were available. This often led to a lot of name calling and maybe a scrap or two.

There were a couple of pretty smooth cow pastures where we kids had our ball games. Some kids had ball gloves and others just used an old leather work glove. The balls were usually wrapped in friction tape to make them last longer. If we didn't have a bat, we whittled one out of a sapling. We never did have good equipment, but we had a lot of enthusiasm and some of our games got quite interesting. We had some pretty fair ball players back in the Junction. When they got older and played on the more organized teams they were an asset.

We even had a crude form of racquet ball. The railroad rights-of-way were mowed with scythes by section hands and they would tell us where they had run into bumble bee nests. We'd grab a paddle and take off. The paddles were a little smaller than a ping pong paddle and were usually made from a slat off an old orange crate. We had a high old time batting down

the bees as they came out of the nests. It was part of the game to end up with several stings, but that was expected. After the bees were cleaned out, we would dig up the nests and suck the honey out of the little pods where the bees stored it. A little dirty, but not too bad.

I think it was my brother Harold who came home one day with an old set of boxing gloves. We rigged up a ring in our haymow and had some pretty good bouts. Nobody every got knocked out, but once in a while a lucky punch would cause a nose bleed.

Since not many of the roads were plowed in the winter, the farmers would hitch their teams to bobsleds when they went to town. It was great fun for the kids to hitch their sleds on the back for a free ride. We called this "hopping bobsleds." The farmers didn't seem to mind and it was a common sight to see six or more sleds behind one team. The only problem was if we rode too far and couldn't get a ride back, we'd have to walk and pull our sleds.

But we soon got a little smart. When we saw a team going back the other way, we would untie and hook onto it for the ride back.

The "cattle guard" was a wooden fenced enclosure along the B&O siding west of the freight office. Here the trains unloaded carloads of cattle, going to market, to feed and water them. There was a six-inch plank around the fence top. We'd see who could walk clear around without falling off. When there were no cattle in the enclosure, it was a good place to have a game of tag or any other game we might think up. When the cattle were being loaded or unloaded, it was a common sight to see most of the kids sitting on top of the fence watching.

The old water tank on the Lakeshore Railroad was a good place to dare each other to climb to the top. A little risky, but no one ever got hurt.

Most all farmers had grain beds on their wagons. This bed could be taken off and a gravel bed put on. They would haul gravel for the country roads to help pay off their poll tax and maybe earn a little extra cash. Those

gravel beds were unique. The sides and ends were about two feet high and the bottoms were made of loose two by four boards. To unload, the driver would pry off the ends and sides and then turn the bottom board on edge to let the gravel trickle out.

One year they were putting gravel on Ensley Avenue. They bought the gravel in on the Vandalia siding in coal cars and shoved it from there to the wagons. If we could find a good-natured driver, he'd let us ride back and forth with him and that gave us something to do for several days.

Another thing that was always interesting was to watch the section hands drive spikes. The spike mauls had heads that were only about ten inches in diameter and twelve inches long. Two or three men would drive the same spike, taking turns and never missing a stroke. We envied those men and would try to drive one in an old tie, but we couldn't come close to hitting it on the head.

Charley Hornett was the signal maintenance man for Junction railroad signals. Charley would tell us when he was going to change batteries in the signal cabinets. We made it a point to be waiting for him so we'd get those old batteries. These were dry cell batteries about three by eight inches. There was still a little juice in them and if we took the wire out of an old Model T coil and hooked up about a dozen of them, we could get a pretty good spark. We could rig them up to a Ford coil and make a very effective shocker. We'd talk someone into holding whatever we were using for contacts, then flip a secret switch and watch him squirm. This led to some pretty good fights, but it was all part of the fun.

We did quite a lot of things with those old batteries. We could make little lights if we found a low voltage bulb. We could make little motors by wrapping wire around a couple of nails and adding a couple contacts. We could make an electric magnet by wrapping wire around a piece of soft iron.

When the juice was completely gone, we would tear those old batteries apart, get the stick of carbon out of the center and write on the sidewalks with that.

There were so many things to do back in the Junction when we were kids. We didn't need a lot of equipment or special programs to keep us interested. We got along just fine without them.

SMOKING

One attraction for kids back in the Junction was to listen to old timers' stories as they sat on Henry's bench in the evenings. Some would be puffing on corn cob pipes, but this wasn't too interesting. Most of us had our own home-made pipes, but there were several men who were expert with chewing tobacco. It was fascinating to see professionals who could drown a cricket or pinch bug at eight feet!

We kids tried to imitate the technique, but you can't work up a good spit without something to color it brown. After trying several different kinds of leaves, we finally settled on catnip. This worked pretty well and didn't taste too bad, but there still seemed to be something missing. Then we noticed most experts chewed plug tobacco. We had to think up ways to make plugs out of catnip leaves.

After a lot of experimenting, we finally came up with a little square wooden frame and a plunger, mixed the leaves with black molasses, filled the frame, set in the plunger, pried up the corner of the corn crib and set our press under the corner. We were able to press out a pretty fair looking plug.

At last, we could imitate the old timers. We would whip out our plug, unwrap the bread paper and cut off a chew with our pocket knife. The color was about right. We never could get the distance from a mouthful of juice that the old timers did though.

We always had our pipes with us when we were not around home. Corn silk was our favorite smoke. We'd tried most all kinds of leaves, but they all seemed to burn our tongues or tasted terrible. Mullein leaves weren't too bad and they could be rolled into a fairly respectable looking cigar, but most of the time either corn silk or coffee was our best choice.

We were always trying to find something new that would taste better than corn silk.

John Dawkins was a bachelor who lived in a small house at the east end of our farm. He grew his own tobacco. In the spring, John would burn a brush pile in the little woods across from our house and plant his tobacco

seeds in the ashes. When the plants had grown enough to plant, he would dig them up and plant them in a plot back of his little house, then tend them very carefully all summer. When the tobacco was ripe, he would strip the leaves and hang them in his barn for a while. When the leaves had aged a little, he would remove the stems, lay up several leaves and with a wooden tool make a tight twist. He hung the twists in his barn to finish drying.

We Junction kids got to talking one day and decided to get one of those twists and try it in our pipes. A couple of us got old John to telling one of his stories (he loved to tell stories, especially to kids) while one of our bunch sneaked into the barn and appropriated a twist.

We sure felt like big men when we had our pipes loaded and were puffing like mad. This lasted about twenty minutes and then that nice strong tobacco started taking hold. Everyone turned a nice, bright shade of green and took off for home.

I don't think Mom and Dad believed me when I told them I'd eaten too many green apples. And John's tobacco was certainly safe from us kids after that.

There was another time when we tried to imitate the old timers that didn't turn out too well. My uncle had just moved to Indiana from Michigan and there were four cousins about my age. We got acquainted very fast and found we all liked everything that we thought might be fun. They were ready to try anything, and they even had some ideas the Junction kids hadn't heard of yet.

We were sitting on their porch one evening when Uncle Frank stopped by. We called him "uncle" but he was just a little shirttail relative of my Dad's. He was also quite a drinking man and tended to be very generous with his money when he'd had a few drinks. Anyway, he gave us kids a quarter and told us to go down to Annie's and get ourselves some ice cream cones.

Henry always kept a box or two of two-for-a-nickel cigars on the tobacco case in his store, and we decided buying some would be more fun

than ice cream. We blew the whole quarter on "two-fers." We had to tell Henry that Uncle Frank had sent us before he'd sell them to us.

We headed for our hut by the creek and sat puffing those cigars. It didn't take long to realize we'd spent our money on the wrong thing. We had several cigars left, so we put them in a sack and tied them to the roof of the hut. They were gone next time we went down there and we guessed that hobos, who slept there occasionally, had smoked them. We were positive none of us took them!

I don't know how my cousins made out, but I was very careful, when I got home to get undressed and into bed before my folks found out what we had been doing.

Smoking cigars was taken off our list of fun things to do.

ICE FISHING

Ice fishing in the late twenties and early thirties was not quite as comfortable as it is today. Since everyone in the Junction liked to fish in the summer, it was only natural that ways had to be improvised to fish in the winter

There were no bait stores, so we had to gather our own bait. The most popular bait was what we called "Hellgrammites." These were actually the larva of caddis flies. We would take a garden rake and find some small creek that wasn't frozen. We'd rake the leaves and grass out on the bank and pick out our bait.

A good Hellgrammite ditch was a secret you told only your best friends. If it was a real good ditch, we could rake out enough to sell some to other fishermen. Wood and stumps could be chopped apart to get woodworms. Dad got a lot of stove wood chopped this way.

If the weather wasn't too cold, you could find corn borers in the corn stubble.

One other bait that was quite popular was mud wasp larva. We'd gather the little mud nests that were under the eaves of house or barn, break them apart and get the larva. This was pretty good bait because we could gather a can full of the mud nests and they would last all winter as long we kept them outdoors.

Clothing was a big item. We never heard of today's insulating materials, so we had to make do with wool. We would haunt the auction sales in the fall for any items that could be used when winter came. The prize, if we could find one, was a horsehide coat. These were long overcoats lined with horsehide with the hair still on. Some had the hair on the outside and some had it on the inside. They were heavy and a day's fishing wearing one was a little tiring, but you could hunker down inside with a kerosene lantern in some pretty rough weather and still keep fairly comfortable.

Feet caused the most problems. Nearly everybody wore four-buckle arctics and we tried everything to keep our feet warm. If you could afford

them, a pair of felt liners was best. If you couldn't afford felt liners, you could make two or three pairs of insoles out of old corrugated boxes and put on a couple pairs of wool socks and get along pretty well.

Wrapping your feet in newspapers helped some, but didn't last too long if you had much walking to do. One old timer told me to rub my feet with Sloan's Liniment and I was stupid enough to try that. At first I had a nice warm sensation, but after walking around with those wool socks rubbing that liniment, I was sure I could walk across the ice bare-footed and never feel the cold. I never tried that again!

Ice augers and spoons were unheard of, so we had to come up with our own ideas of how to get a hole through the ice. Our first thought was to use an ax, and this worked fine if the ice was only five or six inches thick, but when it was ten to twelve inches thick, we could see that chopping a hole was taking up too much valuable fishing time, so we started making ice spuds.

Our first spuds were fairly crude. They were just an iron bar with the end flattened out and filed sharp, but we kept improving on them.

I think the best spud I ever used was one Cy McNabb made from an old buggy spring he found out at his uncle's farm. This was welded in the end of a piece of one-inch pipe, then heated and pounded out to a thin cutting edge. Cy spent a lot of time filing, whetting and I even suspect he might have honed it with a razor strop. He kept it really sharp and it took very little time to cut a hole no matter how thick the ice happened to be.

Our rods and tackles were a little crude to start with. A straight willow limb made a fair rod, but the small end of a cane fishing pole was a little better. We finally came up with the idea of using an umbrella rib stuck in the end of a piece of broom handle with a couple of nails to wrap the line on. We used these until one of the stores started selling bamboo fly rod tips. Then we started making some pretty fancy rods. Years later, fiberglass replaced the fragile bamboo tips.

Fish lines were made from a spool of silk thread either bought at Henry's Store or snitched from our mother's sewing box. Medicine bottle corks served as bobbers, and we usually could scrounge up enough money to buy an assortment of hooks and sinkers.

Some of the older fishermen would use hairs from a horse's tail for leaders, but when we tried that, there was too much breakage for us kids.

With all that equipment and an old ice cream scoop, we were ready to *FISH.*

Our first fishing trips were at the crick west of the Junction. We caught chubs and shiners and thought we were big anglers. When we got older, we talked some of the men with cars into taking us along when they went up to the lakes around Angola, but we had to promise to gather the bait. Those first trips to a real lake were something to look forward to, even though we would spend most of the week after school gathering bait. We were very careful not to complain about being cold or tired for fear they wouldn't take us again.

When we got to the lake, there were several methods of checking ice thickness. One way was to see if we could hit water with one chop of the spud. If we didn't, it was safe to go out and fish. We kids were a little timid, so we followed an older man, unless there were other fishermen out on the lake. If we happened to hit a thin spot along the edge, we'd end up fishing with wet feet, but we never complained within hearing distance of the men. If the men broke through and got wet feet, though, a peculiar blue haze would follow them all the way to the fishing area.

Ice fishing has changed in the last sixty years, but even though we didn't have all the gadgets available today, we were every bit as enthusiastic as today's fishermen are. I have to admit it is a lot more comfortable fishing today than back in twenty-nine.

GUNS

Most any paper you read today is full of the pros and cons of gun control. Back in the Junction, where everyone had guns, the only control was our dads, and you learned to use guns right or you didn't use them at all.

Sometimes we thought we were restricted too severely, but we soon learned to handle guns safely. For example, I was pretty small when my sister bought me a Daisy BB gun for Christmas one year. That went about everywhere with us kids, but when Pete Ankney caught us shooting his bull in its tender parts just to see it jump and told Dad, that gun was locked in a closet for about six months. You learn real fast when you lose your prized possession for that long!

When we were first allowed to carry guns to hunt, we only got to go with our dads. It seems that all fathers had good voices, and it was embarrassing to get bawled out across a ten acre field for doing something your dad didn't approve of. That made us very careful to do everything right when hunting with them, but it also taught us what was right or wrong when carrying guns.

There were very few hand guns back in the Junction. People didn't need them for protection, and since they were not practical for putting meat on the table, only a few could boast they owned a pistol. The few that did usually kept it only as a relic and tucked it away in a trunk with other keepsakes. Dad had an old nickel-plated revolver in his trunk that he never shot and would never let us kids shoot. I think it might have been handed down from his father.

Once in a while we got a little lax and forgot what we had been taught. Dad had several old muzzle-loading guns that he kept up in the attic. One was an old Civil War, smooth bore musket that was given to him by one of his forebears. One day my older brother and I were home alone, and he suggested we get out that old musket and try to shoot it. That sounded good to me, so we cut open a smokeless powder shotgun shell and loaded her up, tamped wadding home, poured in the shot, put on a percussion cap, and she was ready to go. My head only came up to my brother's shoulder, so I stepped around the corner of the house. He pulled up, pointed her towards the barn and touched her off. It made a very satisfying boom, but it also blew the breech into a dozen pieces and splintered the forearm clear up under his left hand. He was lucky he didn't lose part of the arm and I was lucky I'd stepped around the corner of the house or I might have lost part of my face. I don't remember just what Dad said, but I am sure he

impressed on us that we were a couple of damn fools.

The .22 rifle and the .12 gauge shotgun were the most popular long guns, and I think about every family had them. Ammunition wasn't expensive by today's standards, but back then it was a major expense, so we were very careful not to use it on something we couldn't eat. Dad got a little testy if we used ammunition and didn't bring something home for the table. If we had a good day hunting, we could sell a rabbit for a quarter and that would buy a box of .22 shells.

We had a number of .22 rifles over the years. One I especially remember was a long, heavy-barreled single shot that my brother had traded somebody out of. It was fairly old, but it was one of the more accurate rifles we ever had. It accounted for a lot of squirrels.

One shot gun I remember very well: a Winchester .12 gauge pump gun. I think Dad got it from his brother in Fort Wayne. He'd let me use it to hunt woodchucks, but would only give me a couple of shells and would expect some game when I came home.

Once I was sneaking up on a den in Sheet's hay field and saw a chuck out quite a ways from his hole. I decided to see how close I could get and finally got between him and his hole when he looked up and saw me. He made a dash for the hole and I couldn't shoot, so as he went past I hit him over the head with the gun barrel. It didn't stop the chuck, but I noticed the gun barrel didn't look right. I found on closer inspection that the muzzle was bent up about a quarter of an inch a foot from the end. I could just hear what Dad would say and I was sure he would never let me carry another gun. I worried all the way home, but, lucky for me, Dad wasn't home. I cleaned the gun real good and put it away. I was afraid for a long while, but Dad had almost quit hunting at that point, and he never did find out what happened.

After that, if you aimed about four inches below your target, that gun shot just fine, but if you aimed it dead on, all the game felt was the breeze when the shot went over their head.

Dad's deer rifle, which he carried on all his hunts in Maine around the turn of the century, was a .38 .40 Winchester lever action. He wasn't too anxious to let us boys use it, but did let my older brothers take it out on

rare occasions. I'd take it out now and then, but was very careful not to let anything happen to it.

It was fun to carry that gun because we could imagine we were back in the pioneer days hunting buffalo. Of course we never saw a buffalo, but we did bag a lot of woodchucks, which was just about as good.

Dad had one other muzzle loader in the attic he called his match rifle. It was a long-barreled gun and was so heavy it was near impossible to hold up to your shoulder to shoot. He used to tell about the turkey and beef shoots he used to enter. He won quite a few with that old rifle.

Years later, when I was interested in guns, I cleaned it all up, got caps, powder and balls and did a lot of target shooting. Never was able to shoot it off hand, but it was pretty accurate when using a rest.

We had a number of guns over the years and since Dad was a hunter, it was only natural that his boys liked to hunt. Some people would say it was cruel to hunt animals, but back then it was part of growing up and nothing edible was ever wasted. We knew what guns would do because our fathers taught us. I can't recall any serious accidents to any kids our age back in the Junction.

HUNTING AND TRAPPING

Living in a community where most all the older men and boys were hunters, us kids played at hunting at a very early age.

We started making bows and arrows which were just a limber tree branch with a string tied across the ends and used willow shoots for arrows. We seldom hit anything, but we did get some hunting practice by stalking stray cats and dogs in the neighborhood.

As we grew a little older, we started making sling shots. If we could talk someone into giving us an old inner tube, we could cut out a good supply of rubber bands. Most discarded inner tubes were half covered with tire patches, but by careful cutting, we could manage to get enough to last a long while. Also, we could cut bands in various widths depending on how strong we wanted a sling shot to be.

Finding the right crotch took a little time. We were very particular. Each arm of the crotch had to be the same diameter and each arm had to be the right angle from the handle. A young maple sapling was the best wood for crotches. An old leather shoe top furnished the stone pockets. It wasn't complete until we decorated the handle with fancy carvings. Some were pretty intricate and most had the owner's initials worked in somewhere.

All roads back then were gravel, so ammunition was no problem. It was a matter of sorting out the proper size and shape. Sparrows were the main target, but most any birds were fair game. All of us kids got to be pretty handy with those sling shots. Every once in a great while, we'd get lucky and get a rabbit if we could slip up on one sitting. That didn't happen often.

We did get a lot of hunting experience in those young days. We didn't get much game, but we were always thinking about being old enough to carry a shotgun, so we tried to learn everything we could about hunting to be ready when that time came. We learned where the best rabbit thickets were and how to stomp up rabbits.

We also learned a lot about hunting from fathers and brothers when they would let us tag along on hunting trips. We were a little young to realize we were being used when they explained how important it was to walk through all the thickets and briar patches when hunting rabbits. It took us a while to catch on that they usually stood out around the edge while we waded through all the thick stuff.

Then came the great day when we were considered old enough to start carrying shotguns. There were a lot of rabbits back in those days and we were hunting whenever we had any spare time.

Harry Hathaway, who had a restaurant and card room in Annie's old building, liked rabbit. He'd give us kids twenty-five cents for a good cleaned one. Hoot, Clit and I would keep him supplied. One day he told us he could use another rabbit. We took off in different directions to see if we could get him one and collect the twenty-five cents. Well, Hoot was the first to get back with a rabbit. He cleaned it all up and took it down to Harry. When Clit and I got back, Hoot started bragging how he was a better hunter than we were. We couldn't allow that, so we decided to fix

him. We stopped in at Harry's that afternoon and each got a bottle of pop. We were sitting at the counter, drinking our pop, and Clit asked me if I had seen Hoot going back to the woods with an old tom cat in a gunny sack. I said I'd seen him just before we all went hunting that morning. Our conversation was loud enough for Harry to hear it all and we saw him go out the back door with that rabbit and buried it in his garden. The next time he saw Hoot, he really gave him "what for" and told him he'd never buy another rabbit from him. Then Clit and I got Harry's business.

Clit and I knew we'd have to keep our eyes on Hoot after that. Even though we were still good buddies and hunted together, we knew he would try to get even some way.

Some time later, Hoot and I went down to Clit's house. His mom said he was out back in a hut he had next to the railroad. We went back and found Clit. He was cooking a pot of potato soup in a half gallon lard pail. It was almost done and smelled pretty good.

I saw Hoot pick up a piece of dried up dog doodle and drop it in the soup when Clit wasn't looking. Clit dipped a spoonful out of the pot and happened to get that "doodle." We saw him stare quite a while at what was in the spoon, so Hoot and I started easing away. Clit finally realized what he was looking at and grabbed that pot of hot soup and started chasing us down the railroad tracks. I imagine we'd have gotten a little scalded if he'd caught us, but we managed to get away.

That incident left me in the middle, with both Hoot and Clit trying to get even. It must be selective memory, but I can't for the life of me remember what they did, I'm just sure they did something. And I know it wasn't long before we were all hunting together and still good buddies.

There were quite a few quail in the area, but we didn't shoot at them unless we happened to see a covey on the ground, where we could, maybe, get three or four with one shot. But in the air, getting one was pure luck and shotgun shells were too expensive to waste.

We had the fox squirrels pretty well cleaned out in the wooded areas around the Junction. There were still a few good woods if we wanted to walk

a couple of miles down the B&O tracks, but we didn't hunt there too often. There were a few pheasants around, but it was just luck if you could kick one.

If rabbit hunting got slow or if the weather was bad, we'd sprinkle grain in a spot out by the barn and watch for a flock of sparrows. When they started eating, we'd shoot into the flock with the old .12 gauge and get fifteen to twenty with one shot. We'd pinch out the breasts and Mom would make a sparrow stew that tasted about as good as chicken.

Trapping was one way to earn a little spending money. We had to hoard our money until we had enough to buy a couple Victor traps and we were ready to start. A small county ditch just east of our farm had a fair population of muskrats and this was where we first started trapping. A good muskrat pelt would bring as much as twenty-five cents at the fur market after it was stretched and dried. Any money we earned at first was spent for more traps.

When we accumulated several traps, we would make sets back along the crick and in holes along the bank for skunks or whatever might come along. A coon hide could bring seventy-five cents or a dollar, and a skunk hide would bring fifty cents to a dollar, depending on how much white was on the back. My brother caught a mink one year and it sold for six dollars, but they were too smart for the rest of us.

We ran our traps before school in the mornings. If we caught anything, we'd have to skin and stretch it after school. It was easy to tell, sitting in class, when someone had caught a skunk that morning.

My brother sent away and got fur prices from buyers. All hides had to be stretched and dried, packaged up and sent to the buyers by mail. Sometimes the prices were pretty good and sometimes fairly low. Price depended on styles at the time. Coonskins would be good one year when coonskin coats were popular, and down the next.

We never made much money trapping, but we earned a little spending money in a season when there weren't many other ways to get the means to see a show at the Court Theater on Saturday night.

The animal rights people could have had a protest march every day back in the Junction. But we used everything we caught or shot, either for the table or to earn money. Nothing was ever wasted. And there was too much natural cover in those days to deplete the animal population.

THE ONION FIELDS

Most of today's papers list all kinds of jobs for young people in their help wanted ads. It wasn't quite like that in the twenties.

When kids felt they were too old to scrounge rags, bones and iron to sell to the junk man for spending money, they didn't have much choice of jobs to pick from. If they got lucky, they'd get a paper route, or they might sell the magazine *Liberty* or *Grit,* a weekly paper that was quite popular at the time. But these jobs were scarce and didn't pay too much, so that left only the onion fields, which paid the enormous sum of $1.50 for a ten-hour day. That wasn't too bad when you could hire a first class carpenter for fifty or sixty cents an hour.

The farmers around the area who had muck on their farms usually planted either onions or potatoes, and there was a lot of hand labor required with both crops.

Some farmers would get people to grow onions on shares. The farmer would furnish all seed, equipment and fertilizer and would pay all expenses. In the fall when the onions were sold, all expenses were deducted and the balance was divided between the farmer and the grower on a percentage basis. Depending on the price in the fall, this could be a good return for the grower or he could end up with very little to show for a summers work.

The Junction kids worked mostly on the muck farms east of Auburn. If we were good workers, we could keep busy most of the summer. Even though it was hard and dirty work, we were proud of our jobs and tried, for the most part, to do good work to hang onto them. Some Auburn kids who tried working in the muck would get what we called "muck itch" and break out in a rash, but for some reason this never seemed to affect the

junction kids.

The onion seed was drilled in rows about a foot apart and there was no way to keep the weeds out of the rows except by hand. The equipment manufacturers did try to come up with a mechanical weeder, but it never went over too big with farmers. They claimed it tore out too many onion plants and didn't do as good a job as a bunch of kids.

The first operation was to go down the rows with a "wheel hoe." This was like a garden plow with two flat blades that cut the weeds out between the rows. Pushing the wheel hoe paid a little extra, like maybe two dollars a day, but not too many of the kids wanted that job, so the grower did most wheel hoeing himself.

It was our job to get down on our hands and knees, straddle a row, and pull out weeds as we crawled along. Sometimes we were paid by the row, so we would straddle one row and weed another row on each side. If we didn't get all the weeds out, we heard from the grower or farmer and often had some rows to do over again. After getting bawled out a couple of times, we were careful to do a good job.

We were always glad when noon came. We were tired, and boy, were we hungry. I carried one of the old tin dinner pails. The lid was a coffee container. There were no thermos bottles back then, so we had to drink cold coffee. I usually had peanut butter sandwiches with cake or pie and fruit. Naturally, we had all the green onions we wanted, and if the farmer had a vegetable garden, we would get radishes and other vegetables in season. After dinner, we would forget all about being tired and go out in the barn and play tag in the haymow. We had a lot of pep back then.

Sometimes on the way home we would stop at a gravel pit and take a bath, but if not, we would get out the old tin washtub, pump it full of water, and scrub off the muck before Mom would let us come to supper.

One time, a farmer north of Auburn came to the Junction looking for weeders. A gang of us said we would go. The next morning he picked us up. Everything went well until noon. After eating, we decided to play in the barn. He'd just had his barn painted a real nice white. Some kids found a pile of corncobs so they climbed up in the haymow, opened the hay door and started to pelt the kids on the ground. It just happened there were a lot

of green apples on the ground, so the kids down there retaliated.

About that time the farmer came out and saw the end of his barn. We thought it looked kind of nice, that white hay door decorated with green spots all around it, but he just couldn't see the humor of it. He let us work the rest of the day, but he never came back to the Junction looking for weeders again.

We were always glad when fall came and the onions were ready to top. Empty crates were kept in a storage shed on the farm and we could figure on a couple days work hauling them to the fields. Everyone carried his own crates and scattered them down the rows to be topped. We had a few set-to's if someone tried to snitch a crate someone else had carried.

Each person would usually top five or six rows at a time. We'd grab a handful of tops, pull the onions, hold them over the crate and cut the tops off with a pair of sheep shears. If the onions were big, we could make as much as three to four dollars a day. Whole families would come out to top onions to help out on household expenses.

The full crates were stacked in rows about five high and the top crates were covered with onion tops and left in the field to dry out thoroughly. When they were good and dry, the screens were brought out. These screens were just wooden troughs with slats in the bottom set a certain distance apart. The onions were dumped on the screen; we'd stir them around and push them toward the bag end of the screen. Dirt, leaves and small onions would drop through the screen, and the bags were filled with nice, clean onions. The bags were weighed, sewn shut and hauled to storage.

The farmers would watch the market prices, and when they thought they were right, they would sell. This would give us a few days work hauling onions from storage to the box cars.

When the onion harvest was over, it was time to dig potatoes.

Since we were in school by that time, we could only work on Saturdays or holidays, but we could usually find a job in the potato fields any time we had a day off.

The farmer had diggers to be pulled down the rows, either by tractor or by a team of horses. These diggers would plow up the potatoes, and

they'd roll down a screen on the back and drop out on top of the ground.

We kids would follow the diggers and pick up potatoes, dropping them into crates. If the farmer had a storage shed, the crates were hauled there and stacked. Most farmers just put the potatoes in what we call pits. They'd scoop out a shallow hole, line it with straw, dump the potatoes in and cover them with a heavy layer of straw. Then they'd shovel a heavy layer of muck over the top.

When the price was right for selling, the pits would be opened. The potatoes were screened, sorted, bagged and hauled to box cars for shipping. This also gave us a few days work, but usually it was late in the fall and it was often a cold, miserable day.

We spent a lot of time working on the muck farms. It was hard, dirty work, but we didn't seem to mind. We had money we'd earned ourselves to spend and we bought most of our own school clothes. We'd buy clothes we liked instead of wearing what Mom and Dad thought we should wear.

It taught us a lot about handling money even though we weren't too wise about some things we bought. But as they say, experience *is* a good teacher.

THE ART OF THROWING

The kids back in the Junction seemed to be able to throw about as soon as they learned to walk. As they got a little older, the ballast along the railroads was a good source of stones and the glass insulators on the telegraph lines made excellent targets. Then, to protect ourselves from some neighbor's big, old tabby cat we'd throw anything we could pick-up.

Green apples in season were even better than stones if we just wanted to see something run, and we could carry spares in our bib overall pockets without the weight of stones. Green apples had another advantage. After we got tired of watching the cows, pigs and chickens race around the barn lot, they could come back after we had gone, and eat the ammunition. So, in our way of thinking, we weren't hurting them but were giving them something to eat.

This philosophy didn't work at all when I tried to explain it to Dad when he caught us "feeding pigs" one day. We were very careful to use the neighbor's animals for targets after that.

When the eggs hatched under the old setting hens, there was usually one or two eggs that didn't hatch. These we hoarded very carefully to be used only on special occasions. They were only used when we were well hidden and we were sure the victim couldn't detect where they came from. If we couldn't find anyone or anything to throw at, we could always slip one on someone's chair before they sat down. This often led to some severe criticism, which usually ended with a good dose of peach sprout "medicine."

When we got a little older and worked the onion fields, the topping season furnished another good source of throwing material. Not only were there a lot of small onions that would be discarded when they were screened, but girls worked in the fields at topping time. The farmer frowned on onion throwing and if he caught you throwing he would ask you, very politely and usually with a few choice adjectives, not to come back anymore. For this reason, we had to be *very* careful, but the boys wouldn't squeal on each other, and equal rights for women wasn't popular then, so the farmer wouldn't listen too hard when the girls complained. He would get a little testy if the boys got too rough, though.

We could always find a good source of throwing materials. There were lots of corn cobs, plenty of spoiled tomatoes, and in the winter, snowballs.

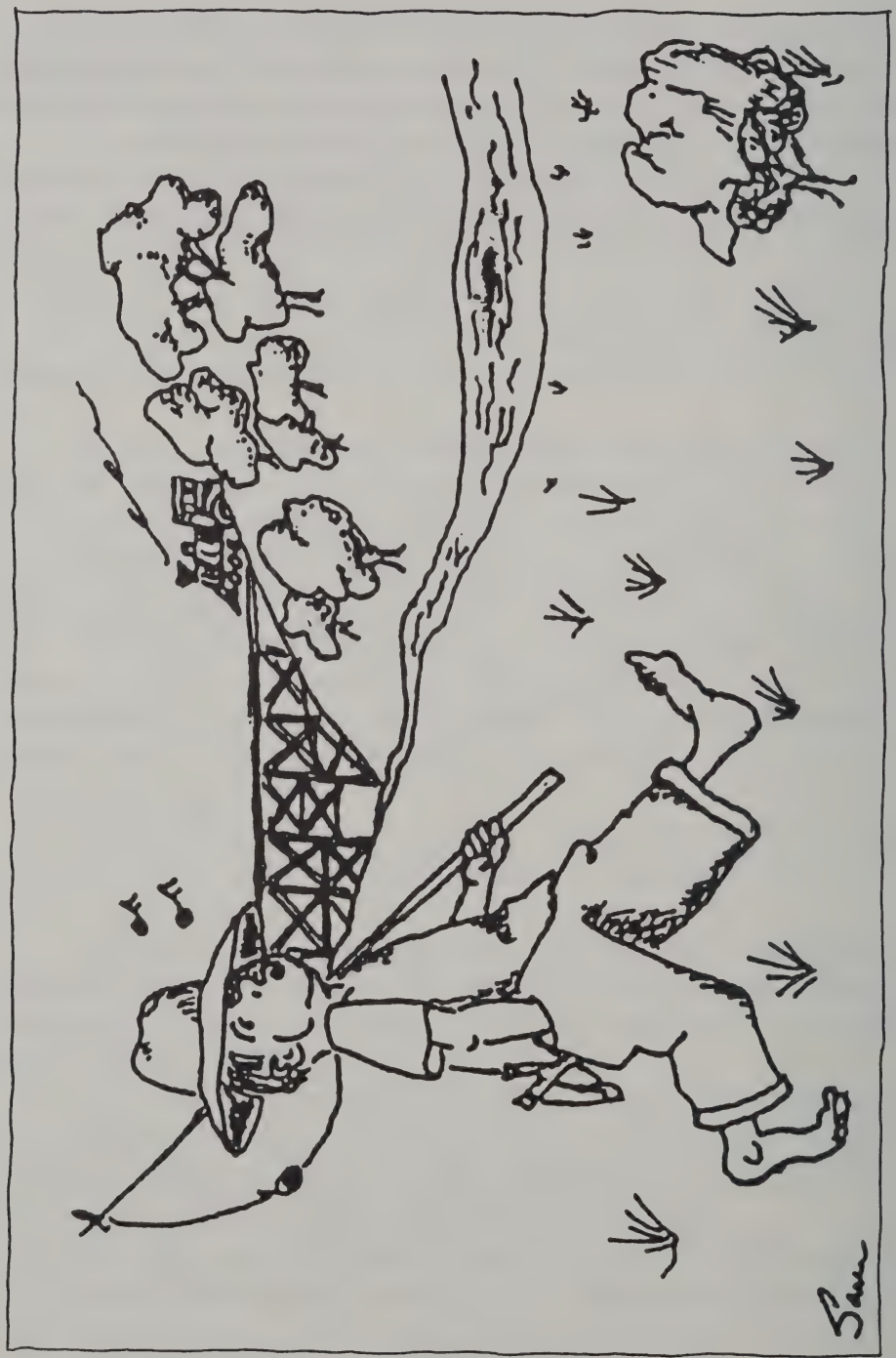
Making snowballs was quite an art. You could add a little water to make them squirt when they hit. You could add a little water and freeze them to make them a little harder. There were many more variations to make for special purposes.

And there's always soft, squishy fruit. I've said earlier Dad's berry patches required lots of pickers at the height of the season. He would pay the girls to come in and pick, but would expect his kids to pick for nothing. This made us a little resentful, so berries became missiles.

The thing that started me thinking of our old patch was a nice, big spoiled berry I found in a row I was picking. I happened to glance up and

noticed a rather portly lady with white shorts stooped over picking ahead of me. You know, a strange urge came over me, but then I remembered what Dad used to do when we couldn't resist such an urge. Besides, her husband was picking next to her, so I was able to stifle that urge.

I decided I shouldn't pick any more berries, just in case I should forget I wasn't a kid anymore and the urge was just too much to resist!



ENTERTAINMENT

There was no formal entertainment back in Auburn Junction, but Auburn had two movie theaters, the Court Theater and the Empire Theater.

The Empire was most popular for us kids because it usually showed westerns. Admission price was only ten cents, so if you could scrape up a quarter, you could ride to Auburn on the Interurban, go to the show, buy a sack of popcorn, and still have a nickel left over to ride home after the show. All that was on Saturday night, and we thought we were big spenders.

You could go to the Court Theater and sit in the balcony for a dime, but the main floor cost twenty cents. It cost a little more when they had vaudeville acts.

I think it was in the sixth grade when my buddies dared me to ask a certain girl in our class to go to the show. I was shy around girls and didn't have much interest in them, but a dare is something you have to do, and she said yes. I spent my free time the rest of the week gathering rags and iron for the junk man to earn enough money to take two people to the show.

The stairway to the balcony was off the main floor, so I bought two tickets to the balcony and watched until the ticket-taker was busy. We slipped into some good seats on the main floor. Of course we each had a bag of popcorn and that strapped me.

I got to thinking that after spending all my free time making money, walking two miles to Auburn, then two miles home, just to take a girl to the show was pretty stupid. But a dare's a dare and you couldn't back down on a dare.

It was a big event when the Medicine Show came to town. They'd find a field they could use near town, set up their stage, put out a few signs, and they were ready to put on their show. They attracted a lot of people as all shows were free.

They'd usually have someone dressed up in feathers doing an Indian dance, sometimes a comic telling jokes, and often a talent contest for local people. These acts were interrupted from time to time so they could

sell their bottled medicine. This stuff was supposed to cure anything from warts to stomach problems. Their big candy sale was usually last. Before selling candy, they'd tell how each box contained a prize and would open several boxes and take out watches, knives, bracelets and a variety of other nice items. There wasn't too much candy in the boxes and I never saw anyone get any of the prizes they showed, but they sold a lot of boxes and everyone had a good time.

An even bigger day yet was the one that saw the circus come to town. The performers and animals and tenders always came by train and unloaded at the Lakeshore Depot in Auburn. From there, they went down Seventh Street to Madden's field to set up. The Junction kids would be there to watch them unload, and then would go out in the field to get a job helping them set up. We could always get a job for a free ticket, and sometimes for a free meal in the mess tent. We carried boards for seats, water, straw, sawdust and anything else we could handle. We worked our tails off, but it was fun.

Then there was the parade of all the wagons and animals around the courthouse square to get people enthused about going to the show.

The fall Fair was another big event in Auburn. If you could brag you rode the ferris wheel, you were a big man. The other rides were a little tame.

The Indian blanket booth was very popular. You'd put your money on a number, spin a wheel, and if your number came up, you'd win a blanket. If all the numbers were filled, someone always won a blanket. If a couple numbers were left open, the wheel always seemed to stop on these open spaces.

When the corn was at its height and dog days came, so did family reunions. They were usually held down at Eckhart Park. Not much going on except visiting, but the dinner at noon was worth all that boredom to us kids.

All the women tried to show off their culinary skills, so the tables were loaded with all kinds of main dishes and pot pies and pickles and salads and preserves. At the other end of the groaning board would be cakes: spice

with penuche icing and lemon and devil's food with seven minute frosting and Lady Baltimore with all the fruit and nuts on it and pies: plum and little green apple and lemon cream and every kind of berry pie and cobbler. Somebody would bring a big freezerfull of ice cream.

The men showed off their melons, peaches, and early apples and even went so far as to plant a patch of sweet corn so it would be ready to pick right at reunion time so all the relatives could have roasting ears.

These were all special days, and everyone, young and old, took the day off to enjoy them.

THE GRAVEL PIT

The Junction kids were considered only half dressed if their pockets weren't loaded down. To begin with, you needed a jack knife, a slingshot and stones for the slingshot. These items were the necessities.

Then their were luxuries, such as a homemade corncob pipe, a Bull Durham sack of either cornsilk or coffee, a box of penny matches, a fish line, and other items boys needed to have from time to time.

It was a good thing we wore bib overalls. If we'd had belts, our pants would have been down around our knees! Running would have been next to impossible if the occasion demanded it, and it often did. Another advantage of bib overalls? When we went swimming, all we had to do was unbutton the suspenders and we were out of those overalls in nothing flat.

Our swimming hole down by the Lakeshore bridge was all right when the crick was high, but most of the summer there was hardly enough water to wade. We had to hunt up another place to swim and we found the old Sheets Gravel Pit.

Our parents always warned us about swimming in gravel pits, but on a hot day if we were down around this pit, we just had to cool off. We also figured that if they asked where we were we could always say we were just hunting frogs. Frog hunting was a good excuse for torn shirts, wet pants, muddy shoes and any other mishap that might have occurred that day. Once in a while they found out what we were actually doing and we

got a good lecture, punctuated with a peach sprout, but the swim was worth it and we would brag about the red welts on the backs of our legs.

I often wonder why parents today don't grow more peach trees in their back yards.

The pit was down the B&O tracks about a mile east of the Junction. We didn't mind the walk as there were so many interesting things to do. If walking the rails got tiresome, the glass insulators on the telegraph line made prime targets for our slingshots.

Both Farmer Sheets and Farmer Ankney pastured horses and cows in fields next to the tracks, so we seldom ran out of targets, although after a while the animals would take off on a run for the far side of the pasture as soon as they saw us coming down the tracks.

The pit itself was spring-fed and fairly clean. It was about thirty yards across, with high banks completely around the water. At first we didn't swim out too far, but when we started daring each other to swim across to the other side, it got a little more interesting. It wasn't long until we could swim back and forth several times without stopping and we felt pretty cocky.

Then we had to have a diving board, so we scrounged up an old plank, buried one end in the bank, and had a fairly respectable place to jump in. We called it diving, but a good belly flop is much more interesting to watch than a perfect swan dive.

A bunch of kids from Stamates town started horning in on our swimming hole, and we just couldn't have that. One day we sneaked up on them, grabbed their clothes and ran. I imagine it looked kind of funny to see four or five kids, stark naked, chasing us down the railroad. We were too busy running to pay much attention to the way they looked.

We finally threw their clothes in a ditch, but were very careful after that to keep a sharp lookout when we were swimming. We were a little more accurate with our slingshots, so they didn't come around too often.

We'd try to leave the pit in time to crawl up under the B&O bridge over the crick and wait for old Number Nine to pass over. Number Nine was a fast, through passenger train that went west about the same time every day. This was not only exciting, it gave our hair a chance to dry and the dirt

helped cover up the evidence that we had been swimming.

Someone wrote a book entitled *Kids do the Darndest Things.* I always suspected he was referring to the kids who lived in Auburn Junction back in the twenties.

Crossed tracks, like geometric shapes, were the pattern's of our lives.

The B&O depot, showing the gas plant in the background and the interurban track in the foreground.

This (circa 1900) saloon at the Junction later burned down

The B&O with a new tower and new signal system.

THE CHICKEN ROAST

The railroad depot in Auburn was a popular place for us kids to play. It was sort of a landmark, but since it was built before we were born, to us it was just another building.

It had two big pot-bellied stoves, and a coal fire was kept burning in both of them in cold weather. This made it handy for us to run in and warm up from skating in the tar swamp or other times we got cold from winter games. Once in a while the ticket agent would run us out if we got too rowdy or when there were a number of passengers waiting for trains.

On Sunday afternoons when there were no passengers waiting, the old timers would gather around one of the stoves and play euchre. Traffic was usually slow in Sundays and the agent would often sit in on the games.

One other attraction of the old station, especially to kids, was that it was open under the floor in the back. This made a good place to play hide and seek.

One particular instance regarding the old depot stands out in my mind. A bunch of us were sitting around one afternoon trying to figure out something to do. Someone suggested we have a chicken roast. We all agreed this sounded like a good idea. Grandma Ditmar lived across the road from our house and let her chickens run in her orchard. Since she was quite old and didn't see too well, this would be the logical place to get our chicken. We all collected pockets full of throwing stones and finally got an old hen.

"Fumbly" was in the group. He was clumsy and couldn't run too fast, so we told him he couldn't go along. We didn't want anyone slowing us down in case we had to run. He took off for the Junction, but when he got there, someone told him his dad was looking for him with a big paddle. He got scared and crawled under the depot to hide and then went to sleep.

The rest of us took our chicken back in Sheets woods and decided that instead of picking the feathers off, we would just pack clay around the whole thing and roast it in the coals of our fire.

One of the gang had read about Daniel Boone doing it this way, so we didn't see any reason why we couldn't do it too. We played around in the woods until we thought the chicken should be done, then broke it out

of the clay, divided it up, and kept telling each other how good it tasted. Did you ever try eating half-cooked chicken with grit from clay and other unmentionables sticking to it? It only took a couple of bites to tell us roasting chicken wasn't as much fun as we thought it would be, so the gang broke up and went on home.

The County Fair was on in Auburn then and I went with Mom and Dad that evening. We were walking around enjoying the fair when the County Sheriff, I think his name was Moore, stopped Dad and asked if he might talk to me. I remember Dad looking at me and saying something like "What the devil did you do now?"

The sheriff said Fumbly was missing and Fat had told him we were all together in the afternoon. There was nothing to do except confess what we had done, but we still didn't know where Fumbly had gone after we sent him back to the Junction.

Fumbly finally woke up and crawled out from under the Depot. He went home and got a real sizzler of a licking, he told us later.

Dad didn't say much that night, but I worried all night about what he might do next morning. I was sure I was in for a good tanning, but the next morning Dad made me go over and tell Grandma what we had done and give her sixty cents I had earned selling rags and iron to the junk man.

Actually, that was a punishment worse than a licking. And that was our first and last chicken roast.

OUR FIRST RADIO

I don't remember just what year it was when Dad bought our first radio. He always liked good music, and when our cousin opened a shop in Fort Wayne and offered to sell Dad one at cost, Dad bought an Atwater Kent.

This was a fairly large box that sat on a table and had three large tuning dials that had to be adjusted to bring in the station. There were several other controls to adjust for volume and tone. It took quite a while

to learn to tune in a station on that radio. The speaker was a large, goose-necked horn that sat on top of the set.

We still had to have an outdoor antenna and this was a piece of braided wire that ran from the house over to the barn. Then a ground wire was connected to a metal stake driven into the ground and both wires were connected to the set. This set ran on batteries, so we had to hook up two "C" batteries and one "B" battery. These were dry cell batteries about twice the size of a cigar box. We still had to hook up a storage battery, like those used in automobiles, before the set was ready to turn on.

There weren't too many stations back then, but a Philadelphia station, KDKA, was the one we could get tuned in the clearest. The few other stations usually had more static and were harder to tune in.

Dad had some favorite comedy and music shows he liked to hear and he'd write down all the dial settings so he could find the station when the programs came on.

If we used the radio frequently, we found the storage battery had to be charged about once a week. Dad would take the battery up to Sherm Baber's battery shop in Auburn to get it charged. Since it took three or four days to get it charged, he finally bought a second battery to have on hand while one was being charged so he didn't have to miss his programs.

It seemed a little odd that some neighbors would always come visiting when certain programs were on the air. Radios were just starting to be popular back then, and not too many people had them; but those who did were always happy to share with their friends.

When radios became more common, the mechanical magazines had plans on how to build your own. The simplest was the crystal set. These were built with a coil, what was called a cat whisker, and a piece of Galena or lead ore. We used the wire from an old Ford coil as a coil and wrapped it around an empty oatmeal box. We'd varnish coil and box, then sand the wire bare in a strip down one side and make a contact that would slide up and down the bare wire for tuning. The cat whisker was fine wire, mounted so it could be moved around to touch various parts of the Galena crystal. With a long aerial and a set of head phones, we were ready to pick up a station.

Our crystal radio really worked well, but it depended on how far a station was from us and on the weather. We made some pretty fancy sets with wood cabinets. Making radios was a good pastime back in those days.

A TRIP TO MICHIGAN

I think it was the second summer after Dad bought a 1921 Model T Ford that he decided we would take a trip to Beulah, Michigan to visit Dad's brother, Uncle Evan. Glenn wanted to stay home so he could look after the farm, but Harold, Helen and I were anxious to go. Mom was a little worried about a trip that far, although she did want to go.

With five people in the car there wasn't too much room for luggage, so Dad bought a rack that clamped on the running board to carry luggage and built another rack on back for more luggage. Besides our clothes, we took old blankets and a large canvas as a shelter for Mom and Dad to sleep under on the ground. We kids slept on the car seats, and I got the floor between front and back seats.

On the second night out, we stopped in an old country school yard and Harold decided he would sleep in the old school house and let me have the front seat. Not too long after dark, he came busting back out. It seemed that old school was full of bats, and they started flying at dark. He finished the night sleeping out on the ground.

There were very few hard-surfaced roads back then except in the larger towns. Some pretty good gravel roads existed in the southern part of the state, but as we drove north, the roads started turning to plain sand. Getting stuck on sand roads was a common occurrence, but everybody stopped to help out. This usually started a nice visit and ended up with an exchange of addresses and a promise to write when we got home.

If you met another car with Indiana plates, that was a good reason to stop and visit. People were very friendly in those days, mainly because you never knew when you might have a breakdown and need help . . . and stopping to visit a while gave you a chance to limber up after driving down those rough roads.

It was about three hundred miles to Beulah, and it took us a good three days to get there. In 1931 three other buddies and I drove to Indian River, which was quite a bit further, in the same Ford and made it in ten hours. By then there were hard surfaced roads all the way.

One other incident happened on the trip. Dad was driving and came up behind a truck with some pipe sticking out the back end. Dad didn't get stopped quick enough and rammed one of the pipes into the radiator. It didn't do too much damage, but we did have to stop in the next town to get it soldered.

Uncle Evan lived about one and a half miles up a hill from Crystal Lake. To get there, we had to drive up a very poor road and through the woods. As I remember, there were two farms on that road, which wasn't too bad up to the first farm. But from there to Uncle Evan's farm, it was pretty bad for a car. Uncle Evan had a team and wagon so the road didn't bother him too much, but the old Ford was a different story. We had to get shovels and fill in a lot of washouts to get the car up and down.

Uncle Evan had four boys at the time, Arnold, Herschel, Curtis and Milo. Mom, Dad and Helen slept in the house and we kids got to make our bed out in the haymow, which suited us just fine. Harold and Arnold made their beds in another haymow in a smaller barn.

We smaller kids spent a lot of time down at Crystal Lake, even though we had to walk back and forth most days if the folks went visiting.

One day they were having some kind of doings over at Beulah and we had all planned on going over in the evening. Well, we were just a little late getting up from the lake and the rest went off without us. Of course, we had to get even, but we knew we couldn't do anything to our Dad, but Harold and Arnold were available. We discussed a lot of ideas and finally decided to do something to their beds. We went out and collected all the bull thistles we could find and laid them under the covers in a nice neat layer. It was late when they got home, and since there was no light in the barn, they just undressed and crawled into bed.

You could have heard them yell half way down to the lake. It woke

all the folks and we had to stay home from the lake for the next three days, but it was worth it.

We had a good time in Michigan and since this was the first trip we'd ever been on, everything was interesting. We climbed the sand dunes over near Empire; we went to Frankfort and saw the big lake for the first time, and we saw all the huge lake freighters docked there.

We visited all our kin folk. There were quite a few of Dad's shirttail relatives living in that area. Hearing them discuss the old days was a treat for a small boy. I suppose some of their tales were true, but some had to be exaggerated just a little.

We were always eating cherries. Those big, sweet cherries were ripe at that time and since they were new to us, we just couldn't get enough of them. We went to Frankfort one day and had a sack of cherries to nibble on, but on the way home, Dad decided to stop at a sulphur spring for a drink. We all had a drink of sulphur water, but didn't get too far down the road until those cherries and that sulphur began fighting each other in our stomachs. Dad had to stop so we could leave them by the road side.

I don't remember any trouble on the way back home to the Junction. We were all tired, but we didn't mind a bit.

We had a good trip, and we certainly had a lot to talk about when we got home.

MUSIC

Music was a part of a lot of what we did at the Junction. Music wasn't taught in the schools until high school years, but we did have our local square dances with, usually, a fiddler, maybe a guitar player, and someone chording on the piano, if one happened to be available. If someone could rattle bones, homemade from beef ribs, he would sit in.

The music might not have been professional grade, but the beat was good and nobody noticed a few clinkers now and then. Most families had one of the old wind-up phonographs, the ones with the logo of a small white dog listening to the music that came out of a big tin horn. Since

records were a little expensive, they were loaned back and forth frequently.

On Sundays, we had singing in the local church down near the Lakeshore railroad tracks. Maybe it didn't compare with today's chorus groups, but it was really enthusiastic!

Our parents didn't have the extra money to buy instruments for their kids, so we had to make our own.

I think the first ones we made were corn stalk fiddles. We couldn't get any music out of them, just a squeak like running a piece of chalk over a blackboard endways, but they did make noise. Then there were willow whistles. We still couldn't make any music, but we could vary the tone a little by using different size willow limbs.

With a piece of paper folded over a comb, we could hum some simple tunes, but when one of the kids acquired a "kazoo," we could even recognize some of the tunes, so we all saved up the ten cents we needed to buy one for ourselves.

Even though we all tried to hum the same tune, it still sounded like so much noise. A "Jews' Harp," that odd little vibrating tuning fork shaped like a bottle (roughly) that you put against your teeth and plucked, cost a quarter, so that meant a full week's worth of collecting rags and iron to sell to the junk man. That didn't help our playing too much.

We tried most everything: tin whistles, nose harps, slide whistles, "sweet potatoes" and finally, mouth organs.

Some of the kids were able to master quite a few of the old tunes. They seemed to have more talent than the rest of us, but a mouth organ was something you could carry around in your pocket, pull out, and think you were making music most any time.

Since they were a little more expensive, we had to spend a lot of time gathering enough junk to afford one. It did help to clean up the Junction of all the trash that could be sold!

Some people had pianos, usually out of tune, but if they had daughters who showed any interest, they could get Jim Grubb to tune them up and then give their daughters lessons. Pianos were considered a girl's instrument and the Junction did turn out some pretty good pianists.

That was about as far as our interest in music developed. Some kids

did have some natural talent, but there were so many things to do, and practicing an instrument was not one of them, especially if someone suggested a game of ball or shinny, or if someone suggested going swimming.

Sometimes you wish you had mastered some kind of instrument, but nowadays you can get most any kind of music that might interest you by just flipping the knobs on a radio or TV set . . . so why worry.

FREEBIES

We kids could always eat, growing up in the Junction. Even though we had three big meals every day at home, we still found it fun to find things growing wild that were good to eat and that didn't have to be hoed, watered and weeded.

In the spring we hunted morel mushrooms and in the fall we would usually take home a puffball for at least one meal. Fall thorn apples or red haws were plentiful and we usually had a pocketful to nibble on. They were small, but they tasted pretty good.

Wild strawberries grew better along the railroad right-of-ways than anywhere else and we knew where to find the best patches. We'd eat our fill first and then, if we didn't have anything better to do, we'd pick a pail full to take home. We always had a strawberry patch at home, but the wild ones seemed to taste a lot better.

Most of the summer there were wild berries of some kind ready for picking. Black raspberries came on first, followed by blackberries. Both made very tasty pies, so it wasn't too much trouble to get us to pick them when they were ripe.

Elderberries ripened later in the fall and they made real good jelly. They also made good pie, but not as good as raspberry.

The Vandalia right-of-way back of our house was a good place to dig horseradish in the spring. It was a little work digging, washing, scraping and grinding, but we knew how good it tasted on our pork. After eating pork all winter, it got a little bland towards spring and horseradish was just what it needed. We all cried when we were grinding the roots in the food grinder, not because we were sad, but because those roots were really potent. After the horseradish was ground, Mom would put it in cans, add some salt and vinegar and store it in the cellar. We usually had enough to last us until the next spring.

Another freebie was sassafras. We'd dig the roots when the first buds appeared, wash them and peel the bark off to make tea. Dad always

claimed it was a good tonic in the spring, but we liked it just for the taste. We'd peel enough bark so we'd have some to dry and store for future use.

In the spring there were always dandelions for greens. Before the plants flowered you could see most of the ladies out with their paring knives and baskets gathering dandelions. Mom would even can them for winter greens. To me, they were just rabbit food, and I wouldn't eat them unless the folks insisted.

The woods in the spring were green with what we called wild onions. I think they have another name, but they were always wild onions to us. They had a stronger taste than green onions from the garden, and it didn't take too many to satisfy your appetite.

Paw paws were found growing in most of the woods. When they were ripe in the fall, they tasted something like a banana and were just about the same shape. Mom never did find a way to can or preserve them, so we never gathered too many to take home.

Sometimes we could catch enough rock bass or suckers in the creek for a meal, but that was more luck than skill.

We did set out turtle lines along the crick and would often have a nice snapper when we went to check them. Turtle was a little hard to clean, so Dad would usually help us. Mom had a way to cook turtle that would probably be classed as gourmet food today.

Mom would cook most anything we brought home, but she did balk at muskrat and skunk. We always had a good supply of hickory nuts, walnuts, butternuts and hazel nuts to crack and eat sitting around the old coal stove in the winter. Mom had no trouble getting us to pick out the nutmeats when she promised to bake cookies if we got enough nuts.

Dad and my brothers always hunted and when I got old enough to carry a gun, most of my time was spent hunting, as we've said earlier. It was usual in the winter to have six to eight cleaned rabbits hanging in the back porch frozen and maybe a coon or a possum to give us a change from the pork and beef stored in the cellar.

Most farmers around the Junction had apple trees, and it was natural that us kids knew where the best apple and pear trees grew. It was a

challenge to sneak into these orchards, and I think it was a challenge to the farmers to try to catch us. It got to be a kind of game between us. We could go to the house and ask, and the farmer would give us all the fruit we wanted, but that would have taken all the fun out of the game.

We always raised plenty to eat on our little farm, but that was work, taking care of the crops. We never considered it work gathering wild things that were edible, even though it was sometimes more work than hoeing potatoes.

Gathering the wild freebies was hard to resist for kids growing up in the Junction.

SOME JUNCTION PEOPLE

When you grow up in a small community like Auburn Junction, Indiana, you tend to remember little incidents in the lives of people who lived there. Some incidents were funny, some sad, some too raunchy to print, and some just rumors you never believed. For example, here are some things that happened, and the people they happened to.

Henry

Henry owned the grocery store and post office. He was considered quite well to do and, compared to the rest of the people, he probably was. His store carried everything including shoes, dry goods, groceries, meats, bread and baked goods.

Henry was a little nervous and tense sometimes and his stock wasn't lined up too well, but if you asked him for something, he would find it with no problems.

When Henry sorted the mail, he'd check each piece two or three times before it went in the customer's box and he usually had a pretty good idea of what was going on in the community by reading post cards and return addresses.

Most everyone had a charge account in Henry's store and most people were very punctual about settling each week. He never had too many bad debts. Henry's store was very important to the people of the Junction.

Annie

Annie had a small restaurant and ice cream parlor in the building next to Henry's store. As I remember, Annie walked with a slight limp, but she was a good cook and served meals to a lot of railroaders.

We kids never went in for a meal, but when we could scrounge up a nickel, we would go to Annie's for an ice cream cone.

These were very special cones. She filled them with a teaspoon and packed the ice cream clear to the point of the cone before finishing with a big gob on top. It was a great treat for us to go to Annie's for a cone.

Harry H

Annie's building was later sold to Harry H. He ran the restaurant for a while and then put a card room in the back.

Later, when beer was legalized, he turned the second floor into a night club with a band for dancing. When the dancing got a little boisterous, you could feel the whole building shake.

Bill

Bill was a drinking man. He never caused anyone any harm, but he had the habit in a big way . . . not the bad falling down kind, but a nice pleasant glow and quite a lot of staggering.

I remember one time, after Dad had given me an old Model T Ford, that Bill said he'd buy me a dollar's worth of gas if I would drive him down to a place near the DeKalb-Allen county line. A dollar's worth of gas in those days meant about ten gallons, and not being too flush at the time, I

said okay.

Bill wanted to go to an old farm house set back off the road quite a ways back a lane. He had a couple bottles of home brew and he bought me a bottle of pop. He also bought a bottle of white mule and we went back to the Junction.

Dad found out some way what I had done and gave me a good lecture. He promised to lock the car in the barn if it ever happened again. Needless to say, I always could think up an excuse when Bill asked me to drive him after that.

Charley

Charley was Dad's good pal. They worked at carpentry, hunted and fished together, and helped each other out at butchering time.

Charley was a good story teller and his stories always interested us kids. One time he was sitting in our living room telling one of his yarns, and he had his hand down rubbing our old tiger cat's head. He must have touched a tender spot, because the old cat raked him down the back of his hand. Charley gave that cat a first class cussing and asked Dad why he didn't get rid of such a vicious animal. He finally calmed down and finished his story as if nothing happened. But he carried scars down the back of his hand for quite a while.

Bruce

Bruce lived across the Vandalia tracks from our house and was a section foreman for a B&O repair crew. Bruce was pretty fat and would usually sit on a rail while his crew worked.

They tell the story that one day Bruce happened to sit down on an expansion joint. When the sun heated the rails, they expanded and the joint closed on his rear end. His men said that was the fastest Bruce ever moved.

I don't to this day know how true this story is, but it was repeated quite often when Bruce wasn't around.

Dave

Dave was a fine wood craftsman and had a shop just north of the Junction where he repaired and upholstered furniture.

He had the first joint of one index finger missing and they tell this story: One day Dave was rabbit hunting and got snow on the barrel of his shotgun. He held the gun in one hand and wiped the snow off with the other. The gun went off at that point and took off his finger.

Dave used to chew about half a package of tobacco at a time, so he took out his chew, slapped it on the wound and wrapped it in his red handkerchief. When he got back to the shop, he dipped the stub of the finger and the tobacco in his glue pot a couple of times. After the glue hardened, he had a nice cast. When he removed the cast in three or four weeks, the finger, believe it or not, was completely healed.

Big Mike

Big Mike worked as a maintenance man for all the railroad signals in and around the Junction. He had a one-man hand car that he used to get from one signal to another and once in a while, he'd give us kids a ride if we'd help pump it. Big Mike didn't talk too much, but he did show us how all the signals worked and gave us the used batteries when he changed them.

John

John lived in a little one-room shack on the east side of our farm. He was a real old-timer. John would never shave during the winter, but we knew when it was spring, because he'd shave, leaving a little mustache and a small beard. He looked just like Buffalo Bill.

My brothers spent more time with John than the rest of us kids did, but he always liked company and he had many stories to tell.

John was a good woodworker and made hickory hammer and axe handles during the winter to sell in the summer. This kept him in staples.

He had an old white horse and he'd drive around the area buying junk. When he got a load, he'd sell it to a junk yard in Auburn.

John had a little patch of ground in back of his house where he raised nearly everything he needed, including corn to fatten a hog and his own tobacco. He would sometimes hire out by the day to help some farmer with threshing or other chores, but only if he needed a little extra cash for some reason.

Frank

Frank was a very interesting person. I think he was a distant cousin to Dad and traveled the area doing plastering jobs. He was one of the best plasterers around, so he could always find work when he wanted it, but he had one problem . . . he liked to tilt the bottle.

Drinking or not, Frank could plaster a room as smooth and even as the present day drywall. Frank would show up at our house unexpectedly and we were always glad to see him. If he was just off a job and had part of his pay in his pocket, he'd give us kids a quarter and tell us to go buy some candy.

He was a natural musician, and he played our old pump organ. Dad would get out his fiddle and Frank would play that. I think he even played my brother's clarinet. We all enjoyed his music.

It seemed a shame to waste all that talent, but Frank liked the way he lived. When his money ran out, he'd just find another job plastering and go on another toot when the job was finished.

The Ditmars

The Ditmars lived in a big brick house across the road from our place. The mother, whom we called "Grandma" and her two daughters, Jessie and Amy, and Amy's two daughters lived together. With five women in one house, there were bound to be some arguments, some a little bit loud.

They owned quite a large farm across the B&O tracks which they

rented out to be farmed on shares. Jessie also worked as a telephone operator in Auburn and rode the Interurban to and from work. When she worked late, she'd start yelling "Maw" when she got off the car. Grandma would go out the door and hold up a kerosene lamp until Jessie got to the house.

The Junction kids took advantage of the Ditmars. Their orchard supplied us with lots of apples and pears.

These are just a few of the Junction people. There were many others and a story could be written about each of them. We may think of them as characters, but back then we considered them good friends and good neighbors.

MORRISON

People were always ready to help each other, but were very careful not to push in where they were not wanted.

In any small community where everyone knows each other, there is someone you remember better than all the rest. One person, who I'm sure all Junction people will remember, was Morrison Guilford.

Morrison weighed between three hundred and three hundred and fifty pounds so he was always called "Fat" by us kids, not because we didn't respect our elders, but it just seemed the natural thing to do and Fat never seemed to resent the name.

He was a gentle, even-tempered man, and to us kids he was someone we could talk to who would listen. Of course, as kids were apt to do, we played a lot of tricks on him, but he never seemed to mind. If some of our tricks were a little mean, he'd remember, and when he caught you unawares, he'd remind you of what you had done and spit your ear full of tobacco juice.

Fat carried the mail sacks between the Post Office in Henry's store and the three railroads. The sacks were never too heavy so there were usually

some of us kids around to carry them for him. That was quite an honor. We thought we were working for the government.

Our mail train didn't stop at the Junction, but just tossed the sack off on the fly and picked up the outgoing sack with a hook in the mail car. The sack was hung from a couple of spring-loaded arms on a post near the tracks. There were several steps to climb to hang the sack so Morrison would get us kids to help him with the job. Once in a while, if the hook didn't catch the sack just right, it ended up under the train's wheels. Nobody ever bothered too much as it never contained too much mail.

When things were a little slow for us kids, we'd wait outside the Post Office until Fat came out with the mail. A couple of us would grab his legs, a couple would grab each arm, and we'd try to keep him from moving. Fat would say, "The mail must go through," and walk right ahead as if there weren't four or five kids hanging onto him. I think he enjoyed that.

Between trains, Fat had a special reinforced chair behind Henry's stove. If someone was sitting in his chair and wouldn't move, Fat would just sit down on their lap. It wasn't long before the intruder cried Uncle. In the summer, he would sit on the bench outside the store. Fat's lunch usually consisted of a dime's worth of bologna, a nickel's worth of soda crackers and a bottle of catsup. He was the only person I know who could drink a bottle of catsup at a meal.

When Fat wasn't busy with the mail, he'd cut hair for twenty cents. If you didn't have twenty cents, you could pay him anytime. He'd sit you down on a kitchen chair then sit on another because it was too much of an effort to stand and do the job.

Thinking about haircutting reminds me of Dad. He used to cut our hair with an old pair of hand clippers. One day I talked him into using the clippers all over my head. When my buddies saw that haircut, they all wanted one like it, so Dad said okay.

Before long, most Junction kids were running around with skinned heads. The kids thought this was great, but some mothers weren't too friendly with Dad for a long time. They let him know it every time they met. Dad liked a good joke and laughed about that for a long time, but he didn't cut the neighborhood kids' hair after that.

Fat and his dad lived in back of the old hotel across the road from the store and they always put out a big vegetable garden. They ate a lot of vegetables, but if anyone needed any produce, they were welcome to help themselves. The same was true at butchering time. They usually butchered a couple of hogs, and if someone needed a little meat, they were always willing to share.

A major part of the Junction was missing when Fat passed away. He was a good neighbor and a friend to everyone, especially to us kids.

AUCTION SALES

Back in Auburn Junction, we never heard of garage sales. In fact, there weren't too many garages. People who had cars could usually find room in their barns and, if not, would build a shed on the side of the barn for a car.

If, for some reason someone had to sell out, they would have an auction sale. As soon as the handbills were passed out or tacked up, people would start making plans to attend. Everyone would tell the sellers how bad they felt on hearing they had to sell and how they hoped they made a lot of money on the sale. Then they'd go to the sale and try to buy an item worth ten dollars or fifteen dollars for fifty cents.

Sale day was a great get-together for all area people. A lot of gossip was passed on about who was seen with whom, who had a little too much to drink, a lot of "Did you hear about . . .," and just general discussion about weather, crops, and other topics. There were no evening news programs, and people were interested in hearing about what was going on. You had to keep your nose clean back in our little community or the whole area would know what you had done in a very short time.

The auctioneer would try to get a few extra cents out of every item, and if several men were bidding on the tools, which were very good items, he'd work on their egos and often get more for some items than the original cost. I guess it was a matter of pride not to let a neighbor outbid you.

Dishes and fancywork attracted the ladies. The auctioneer was in "hog heaven" when he could get a number of ladies bidding on the same item. It was hard to tell whether the bidders really wanted the item or whether it was plain bull-headedness that made them run a twenty-five cent item up to a couple of bucks. This often led to some interesting conversations between husbands and wives and added a little spice to the gatherings.

ODDS AND ENDS

There were always several boxes of odds and ends that sold for a quarter or less. Sometimes you could find items you could use, but mostly they added to the accumulation of junk already sitting in barns and outbuildings. Buying one of these boxes was the adult version of a kid digging around in a crackerjack box looking for a prize. It really isn't much different at today's auction sales.

Furniture items were usually looked over by newlyweds or couples about to get married. Older people hesitated to bid when they saw these young people bidding on furniture to set up housekeeping. They considered the youngsters family and helped them in every way they could.

It was fun to watch livestock being sold. Families knew the stock beforehand, but if some city dude who'd just bought a farm started checking hooves, teeth, eyes and legs of the animals, you'd see the old timers start snickering and winking at each other. They'd bid the animal up, but seemed to know just when to stop and stick the dude with an over-priced animal. The story would always be good for a laugh on Henry's bench.

Auction sales were an excuse for taking a day off from grubbing out a living and enjoying a good visit with neighbors. Sometimes you found a bargain you could use.

SQUARE DANCES

One popular entertainment in Auburn Junction was square dances. If someone had a large living room, they might decide to have a square dance, so they would roll up the rugs, move the furniture back against the walls, and invite everyone over. Most everyone came unless they were under the weather. They would all bring food, even if they just came to visit rather than dance.

Earl Stouder and his mother would be contacted to furnish music, Earl on the guitar and his mother on the fiddle. If the house happened to have a piano or an organ, there was always someone who could chord on that. Several old timers could call the dances and others could fiddle so there was always someone who could take over and keep the sets going.The dancers were a mixed group, young and old.

The people who knew all the calls would help out those who were just learning to dance. Everyone had a lot of enthusiasm and if an especially lively tune was being played, the whole house shook. It was interesting to watch some of the old timers dance. If you met them walking down the road, you got the impression it was hard for them to lift one foot ahead of the other, but when they started dancing, they could swing their ladies as well as the twenty-year-olds.

About the only thing that could stop the dancing was when the food was set out. Dancing didn't interest us kids too much, but we sure held our own when it came to eating!

After eating, there was usually a brief rest where the men got together to talk about crops or politics and to tell the latest stories, some a little bit raunchy. The ladies would talk about cooking or sewing, or exchange recipes, or maybe discuss the current gossip.

Younger, unmarried folks would pair off and find something to do that didn't require too much talking. We kids could always find something to do, and sometimes we would eavesdrop on some very interesting conversations.

There was never much drinking at these dances. Maybe the adults would have a little homemade wine or a glass of home brew, but one night

someone brought a mason jar of bootleg whiskey.

We kids saw where they hid it out by the grape arbor and decided to take a little sip, just to see how it tasted. If you ever tried to drink out of a mason jar, you found that if you try to take a sip, you will always get a gulp.

After drinking a couple of glasses of water to put out the fire, I didn't feel too bad, but it was only a few minutes until I couldn't walk straight. One of the kids got scared, so he went in and got my dad. Dad took one look, grabbed me by the arm, and marched me home. He had a few choice words for about every step, but he did say he wouldn't give me a licking because I would feel bad enough in the morning. As usual, Dad was right. They say you learn by experience, and that trick surely taught me a lesson.

One time when we were a little older, there was a dance at Brandons' house. There was a family there with two daughters, Rosy and Tilly. My cousin had a Model T roadster and wanted to take Tilly home after the dance, but she wouldn't go unless Rosy went along. He kept pestering me to go along. I wasn't too interested in girls and told him I didn't want to go. He kept after me, so I finally gave in. I told my Mom where we were going and, of course, she said something like "Behave yourself!"

Now Rosy was a little chunky, and since the one seat in that roadster only held three people, Rosy had to sit in my lap. The roads were rough and the girls lived up north of Waterloo, but we finally made it. When we arrived, the girls invited us in for milk and cookies, but when I started to get out of the car, both legs were sound asleep and I couldn't walk. I had to sit down on the running board. The girls' folks came home about that time and made the girls go in, so we didn't get our milk and cookies. We nearly got back to the Junction before I could feel any life in my legs.

But those dances were fun for old and young.

THE BIG DIG

Uncle Arthur was a farmer who lived a couple of miles south and west of the Junction. He had a very well kept farm with a county ditch running across the south side. We called it "Dirty Ditch" because it was the drainage for Garrett City sewers. It wasn't really too dirty, since most people had outhouses instead of flush toilets.

Dirty Ditch was grown up to brush and weeds along each bank, which made it prime hunting for rabbits. It also seemed a good place to find morel mushrooms in the spring. There were muskrats in the ditch, but it was too far to walk to tend traps before school, so we didn't trap it very often. Uncle Arthur farmed with horses, and naturally had a big pile of stable cleanings in back of the barn. We earned a lot of quarters digging red worms for the fishermen in that pile. It was a little smelly, but those quarters covered up the smell in pretty good shape.

There were other attractions for us kids on Uncle Arthur's farm. There was a big barn to play in, a nice apple orchard for mushrooms in the spring and apples in the fall. There were many other things we enjoyed. We did help him with his chores as much as we could, and he seemed glad to have us around since he and his wife didn't have any children.

My two cousins worked for Uncle, plowing in the spring and with harvest in the fall. One spring, they were plowing a field back near the Lakeshore Railroad and happened to turn up a big tooth in a patch of muck in the center of the field. It was about five inches long and about three inches high. It looked like a big double tooth. They gave it to my uncle, who identified it as a mastodon tooth.

When my cousins told me what they had found, we started making plans to dig up the whole animal, but Uncle said he wanted to talk to a university to see if they might be interested in hunting for the rest of the animal. If they were not interested, then we could go ahead.

The university wasn't interested, so we started looking for bones. I think we spent several days probing with iron rods before we found a place where there were a few small pieces of what we thought were bones. That's where we started digging.

My folks began to wonder where I was spending all my time, and all I could say is that I was down helping Uncle Arthur. My cousins and I had pledged not to tell anyone what we were doing. It wasn't exactly lying, of course, but it wasn't exactly the truth either.

We dug for a couple of days and finally started finding more pieces of bone that we thought might be part of a rib. Then we really started throwing dirt like mad. We ran across a couple of big leg bones, some back bones, and a large rib bone. We had a lot of small pieces, but had no idea what they might be. If I remember rightly, we also found two more teeth.

In a couple of days, we had quite a pile. I'm sure if we'd known what we were doing, we'd have found a lot more, but since we were doing it for fun, we probably spoiled or lost more than we found.

We hauled the bones up to the barn in Uncle's wagon and they were there for quite a while. When word got around, a lot of local people came out to see them. I don't know what happened to the bones after that, but I believe the teeth are in the relic case up in the DeKalb County Courthouse.

Our enthusiasm for digging had worn off by that time, so we covered up the hole and found other things to do.

Uncle had one field across the ditch where we found a lot of arrow heads and broken parts of heads. That area must have been good hunting way back before white men were around. It wasn't too bad for rabbits, pheasant and quail when we hunted there either.

HOLIDAYS

There were two holidays, besides Christmas, that the kids of the Junction looked forward to: Halloween and the Fourth of July.

On Halloween there were the dress-up parties where we bobbed for apples, played spin-the-bottle and Post Office, but as we got a little older these seemed a little tame, so we came up with some better ideas.

Since everyone had a two-holer out in the back, these were a prime target, especially if we had a grudge against the person who owned the outhouse. Several kids would get together, select one person to watch the house, and the rest would push it over and run. If there were enough kids they would often just slide it back and leave the pit exposed in front of the door.

Another trick that was quite popular for a while was to put a fresh cow patty in a paper grocery sack, twist the top shut, put it on someone's porch, light the top and then yell "Fire" and run like mad. When someone from the house came to the door and saw the burning sack, his or her first thought was to stomp it out. You could hear them holler and cuss half way across the county, or so it seemed.

One year, some of the bigger boys borrowed (?) a farmer's buggy, took it all apart, hoisted it to the top of the freight office and then put it back together. This was quite a topic of conversation when the people saw it the next day. No one came right out and accused us of some of these tricks. We were very careful not to be seen, but would make some remarks like "Someone was going to get a load of buckshot if it happens again."

Then there were the usual tricks of corn shocks in front of the door, pumpkins in the yard, shelled corn on the porch and anything else we could think of.

We got some pretty good lectures from our dads for some of the things that happened. They always seemed to know who was guilty of some of the tricks. They were a little lenient on us because I think they may have done some of the same things when they were kids.

Several weeks before the Fourth of July we would save all our pennies and dimes to buy firecrackers. There was no restriction on selling them, so we had a good assortment to choose from. The most popular was what we called the "two-incher." They made a lot of noise, but could be used in a lot of ways. We could stuff them down rat holes, build little houses out of orange crates and blow them up, or maybe toss one next to a horse or cow to see them take off. We usually tried to save a few to take hunting with us to scare rabbits out of holes or culverts. They worked just fine.

Since firecrackers were a little expensive for just making noise, we

could use a carbide can for a noise maker. This made as much noise and was not as hard on our store of pennies. We made our carbide cans from empty quart syrup cans with a good tight lid. We would punch a small hole near the bottom with a nail, drop in a piece of carbide, put a few drops of water or spit on the carbide, pound the lid on tight, wait a couple seconds and then touch a match to the hole. The gas inside would explode and blow the lid off with a very satisfying boom. We tried a gallon can one time, but that was too much gas and we blew that can to smithereens.

Christmas was a quiet kind of day. We would hang our stockings up on Christmas Eve and were almost sure there would be an orange and a sack of candy in them next morning. If we could find a little pine tree in the woods, we would have a Christmas tree, but if not, we would make do with a small maple tree. This was decorated with popcorn strung on thread with a needle and any other bright trinket we were able to scrounge up. In our first few years at school, the teacher would let us take home our Christmas masterpieces and these would be hung on the tree. We would try to save up enough of our pennies to get our folks a little something. They appreciated it even though it didn't amount to very much.

The high point of the day was Christmas dinner, usually roast chicken with all the trimmings and mince meat pie. We all stuffed ourselves and we still had candy and peanuts to nibble on in the afternoon. But you know, we could still eat supper when Mom set out the leftovers.

Christmas was a family day and we spent it together, at least until dinner was over.

One other holiday we never enjoyed too much was Labor Day. School started the next day and that meant the end of summer for us. It was hard to knuckle down and take an interest in school, but we eventually quit staring out the windows and started to study.

Holidays were a break for everyone to forget the daily grind of scratching out a living.

WAY BACK WHEN

As we get older, we think of the past more often than we do the future. After all, we can only guess what the future will be, but we know what happened in the past, and if not, we can read about it.

Dad had a bundle of old newspapers that he kept in his trunk (I never knew why) along with a number of other personal items. Reading them over gives you a pretty good idea of what went on in DeKalb County way back when.

Hot News From 1884

For example, under the heading "Local Matters" of the *DeKalb County Republican* dated April 23, 1884, I found the following:

By a census of the Town of Auburn just completed by Jacob Walburn, it has been found that the exact population is 2,056.

(Makes you wonder how they attracted that many people without a McDonalds or a Kentucky Fried Chicken, doesn't it?) Then:

- *The aggregate of taxes paid into the Treasurer's Office on last Thursday was $12,172.00. (Now, if my math is correct, that figures out to about $6 per person. In some ways the old days might not have been too bad!)*

- *Fifteen loaves of bread for $1.00 at Gibson's Bakery.*

- *Seventeen loaves of bread for $1.00 at Hollister's. (Seems like Gibson and Hollister were in cutthroat competition. I guess you could get a wagon load of day-old bread for a couple of bucks.)*

- And for the monument works: *A $100.00 monument at B. Goodman's, which he is selling for $30.00.*

And: *$250.00 monument for only $30.00 at B. Goodman's.*

And: *The F. C. Shull Monument is completed. Call in and see it at B. Goodman's.*

And: *Photos inserted in all monuments of B. Goodman. They are protected from the hot sun or air and are water tight.*

And: *Monuments for $15.00 up. B. Goodman will give you more value for value.*
(You could get a pretty good bargain at Goodman's, but, of course, if you needed any of Goodman's merchandise, you could let somebody else worry about the cost.)

I especially enjoyed the items put in by the editor. I think they called them "fillers."

- *Spring is here and so is the tax man.*

- *Spring poets to the front! Door, of course, is understood. And they will please close it from the outside.*

- *One of our stoves is getting reckless of consequences. It smokes during business hours and this is positively prohibited.*

- *Looking out of our office window the other day, a sight met our eyes which stirred our soul to the very depths. A loaded wagon, losing all interest in the affairs of the world, started on a tour of the center of the earth. It sunk as far as the hubs and stopped. Three horses changed the course of affairs and the wagon was on solid ground again.*

- *"I am looking for an opening" said the dapper young man as he stepped into our sanctum. We showed him the open door, and the presumption is that he found what he was looking for.*

- *According to the decision of Democratic members, Congress will adjourn on the last of July. Then will the wicked cease from troubling and the weary be at rest.* (Naturally, the editor would have to live up to the name of his paper.)

- *McQuestin and Long were the first in the county to sell 12 pounds of standard granulated sugar for $1.00, 13 pounds of standard coffee for $1.00, and 15 pounds of light yellow sugar for $1.00. Come and see them.*

- *Fourteen pounds of sugar for $1.00 at Gibson's.* (It seems Gibson got beat down by Hollister on bread, so he wasn't going to let McQuestin beat him out of sugar!)

There were many other interesting items in those locals, but we'll save them for another day.

MORE OF THE PAST

I guess I should never have come into possession of Dad's old newspapers. I can't seem to put them down when I start reading them. Here are items from the "About Town" column in the *Auburn Courier* of January 8, 1885.

> *Our old friend, John Harris, the grocer of Auburn Junction, is the postmaster for the new office established there. He is a jolly fellow, and though he is about to become a federal office holder, he doesn't feel a bit stuck up about it. And now we think about it,*

we believe he is the first democratic officer appointed since the election. Score the first victory for Auburn Junction.

I wasn't even a gleam in someone's eye back then, but I do remember how popular the post office was back in the twenties when Henry Harris was the proprietor of the grocery and ran the post office. Most everyone in the Junction could hear the mail trains whistle and would gather at the store to exchange gossip as the mail was being sorted. I imagine that custom was even more popular back in 1885.

Cure-all tonics must have been very popular and some ads promised miracle cures:

A husband's greatest blessing is a strong, faithful, vigorous wife with a clear, handsome complexion. These can all be acquired by using Dr. Harter's iron tonic.

A deceived woman is the lady who uses cosmetics, face lotions, white lead, bismuth, arsenic powders, etc. in the belief of enriching and beautifying her complexion. It is temporary and ultimately destroys the skin beyond the power to restore. Stop it! Stop it now and use only Harter's Iron Tonic, which imparts the vigor and loveliness of youth.

The recovery of Prof. Sanborn of New Hampshire, after being announced incurable by a score of physicians, was effected by administering Dr. Harter's Iron Tonic, which has restored him to his former good health.

That Dr. Harter must have discovered the ultimate cure-all. (I wonder if there is any iron tonic still around?) He also believed in advertising the merits(?) of his product. I've heard the old-timers say that patent medicines in those days were about seventy-five percent alcohol. No wonder they brought blushes to ladies' cheeks and helped men forget all those other ailments. But if the Iron Tonic didn't cure you, you could always switch to Dr. Jones' Clover Tonic.

> *This extreme tired feeling we have in the spring, fall and during summer denotes torpid liver; we have no appetite and no ambition. Take Dr. Jones' Clover Tonic. It corrects these troubles and restores good spirits. It speedily cures dyspepsia, bad breath, piles, pimples and malarial diseases. A perfect tonic and blood purifier. Can be taken by the most delicate. Price 50 cents.*

The clover tonic might be better than the iron tonic. People had a lot of decisions to make in those days.

> *Our friend, W. J. Frederick, proprietor of the Garrett Skating Rink, complains that the Auburn girls attract the young men over to their town. Of course they do. Auburn has the best looking girls in Northern Indiana so you can't blame the boys for coming over here every few evenings.*

I have no reason not to agree with this, but I do wonder why so many of the Auburn boys of later generations married Garrett girls?

> *Auditor Tomilson has put himself up a new and commodious barn lately, but the cold weather has kept this tender Courier reporter from catching sight of it 'til the other day.*

I'm not sure, but I don't believe any of our present *Evening Star* reporters would let a little cold weather prevent them from writing a story or getting pictures of such a momentous occasion as this.

If you are interested in local history, old newspapers are a very entertaining reference.

WHY IS IT?

From the time I was a boy learning how to live in Auburn Junction, I always wanted to know "why."

When you're sitting around with nothing to do, you get to wondering why things happen the way they do. You wonder whether some things are caused by the phases of the moon, or maybe there are gremlins around who delight in causing problems. Even sunspots might have something to do with what happens. There must be a solution, but you can seldom come up with one that makes sense. For example,

- Why is the milk always sour when you wake up craving a big bowl of corn flakes for breakfast?

- Why do you forget either your pipe or your tobacco pouch when you go fishing?

- Why does the garbage man always come early when you get up late?

- Why aren't blueberry pie and dentures compatible?

- Why does the phone always ring at the most interesting part of your favorite TV show?

- Why is it that when you wake up chilly in the middle of the night, the spare blanket is on the floor at the foot of the bed?

- Why do cobwebs show up so plainly when the sun shines on them?

- Why is it pouring rain early in the morning when

you've laid out all your fishing gear for an early start?

• Why do dirty dishes multiply overnight in the kitchen sink?

• Why do light bulbs burn out when you don't have a replacement on hand?

• Why can't the paper boy hit the porch when he delivers the paper?

• Why do you miss the most visible spot when you've dusted?

• Why are the hills you climbed so easily last year so much higher this year?

• Why do you put off jobs until tomorrow which should have been done yesterday?

• Why does tomorrow never come?

• Why is it that when you decide to start walking before breakfast, it is so easy to talk yourself out of that stupid idea?

• Why is it that when you hit your thumb with a hammer, the only person within hearing distance is an avid church-goer?

• Why is a forty degree temperature so much colder than it used to be?

• Why do pockets wear out before pants?

• Why doesn't coffee taste just as good after it's been in the pot three days?

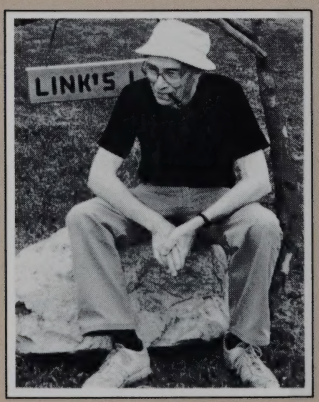
• Why do fish always bite best the day before you go fishing?

• Why is it that when you see something that would make a perfect picture, you don't have your camera?

• Why do jelly bags tear just as you are squeezing to get the last drop?

• And why can't I find something better to do than wonder?

Every kind of mischief in the history of America was tried by the boys of Auburn Junction in the first few years of this century, or at least it seems so when one reads Floyd Link's fine and detailed memories of Auburn Junction. This tiny village of a few hundred people, at the junction of the railroad tracks, contained a canning factory, a kraut factory, a gas factory, a filling station, a hotel and a restaurant. What really made the town function though, were the families who lived within the frame farmhouses along the gravel roads. Annie, "Fat," Frank the drinking man, Henry the store-keeper and of course the kids — overrunning the yards, overturning the privies, smoking cornsilk in home-made shacks and throwing taffy balls at the ceiling during a candy party. This delightful and well written recollection is a "keeper" for anyone interested in re-experiencing life exactly as it was in a unique little village in a time long gone by.



About the Author . . . Floyd Link was born in Auburn Junction in 1913 and lived twenty-two years there, moving to Auburn when he married in 1935. Most of his working years were spent in toy manufacturing and enjoying his out-of-doors hobbies. Floyd is the father of two sons and the grandfather of four girls.

Between trains, Fat had a special reinforced chair behind Henry's stove. If someone was sitting in his chair and wouldn't move, Fat would just sit down on their lap. It wasn't long before the intruder cried Uncle. In the summer, he would sit on the bench outside the store. Fat's lunch usually consisted of a dime's worth of bologna, a nickel's worth of soda crackers and a bottle of catsup. He was the only person I know who could drink a bottle of catsup at a meal.

Guild Press of Indiana, Inc.
6000 Sunset Lane, Indianapolis, Indiana

ISBN 878208-26-8

$9.95